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BOSS BOB, THE KING OF BOOTBLACKS; or, The Pawnbroker's Plot.

BY EDWARD L. WHEELER,

AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK," "ROSEBUD ROB," "GILT-EDGED DICK," "BONANZA BILL," ETC., ETC.



"WELL, NOW, SEE HERE, MY HERRAW FRIEND, IF YE'OD DON'T WANT ME TER GIT UP AN' BOOT YE, YE HADN'T BETTER GOT A PAW ON THIS BOX. MY NAME'S JOSHUA EVERGREEN, FROM PLUNKET, VERMONT, AN' I RECKON I'M'S GOOD'S LITTLE 'BY DAY IN A WEEK, AN' 'TKE ON SUNDAY."

BOSS BOB, THE KING OF BOOTBLACKS;

OR,
The Pawnbroker's Plot.

A STORY OF PHILADELPHIA.

BY EDWARD L. WHEELER,

AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK," "ROSEBUD BOB," "GILT-EDGED DICK," "BONANZA BILL," ETC.

CHAPTER I.

BOSS BOB, THE KING OF THE BOOTBLACKS.

"SURE me name it's Maloney.
Faix, I'm thin an' bony,
And tha d-'s own crony,
Sez Mistress McGrady—
Too! la! de la, toodle de da-a-a!"

In the clear early gloaming of a June morning, these words were sung out, in a rollicking, boyish voice, which was tinged with the broad brogue of the Emerald sod. Then, after a slight pause, there came another outburst of poetry and melody—

"Black yer boots! black yer boots!
Make 'em neatly shine,
Dust yer collar, pull down yer vest,
All fer half a dime.
An' if ye aren't satisfied
Whin I hev partly done,
Gi' me a dime an' the toe o' yer boot,
An' then ye'll see me run."

There was no mistaking the fact that the singer had the key to jolly delivery.

The time was two o'clock, morning.

The locality was the Market street bridge, which forms one of the several links connecting East Philadelphia with its western sister.

Everywhere a myriad of street lamps shone, but only feebly lit up the extreme darkness.

Through its wide channel the majestic Schuylkill crept silently away toward the ocean; a few lights only were seen upon its surface.

The bridge was deserted, but few pedestrians being abroad, and it was yet an hour ere the tinkle of the first car-bell would be heard.

The puff of a locomotive in the yard of the Pennsylvania Railway, announced that a late train had just arrived, with a cargo of human freight—visitors to the great Centennial.

A man left the Pennsylvania passenger depot, satchel in hand, and strode eastward.

He had come in upon the delayed excursion train, but chose not to remain in the depot until morning, as hundreds of others did, nightly, during the great Exposition.

A few steps down Market street brought him to the bridge. At the western end a grim figure stood against a pillar, but the silver star upon his coat betokened his calling—Mike Moriarty, regular, at your service.

The stranger advanced midway across the river; then paused, set his satchel upon the bridge, and wiped the perspiration from his brow as he leaned against the railing and gazed over into the river.

The night was sultry, oppressive. A heavy vapor hung over the lower districts of the city; an uninviting stench of sulphurous smoke came from the gas-house on the south-eastern shore.

"I almost wish I'd remained in my sleeping-car until morning," the stranger mused, gazing into the dark waters of the silent Schuylkill.

"It is so different here from what I deemed it. I am in a mighty city—how much larger, I wonder, than Toledo? Ah! the city the Centennial! A thrill passes through me when I realize the fact, and eagerness drowns trouble. Hello!"

It was at this moment that the rollicking snatch of song was heard. Weirdly strange it sounded, in the dead of night, yet Oliver Mortimer listened, eagerly. He was an ardent lover of music, be it in the crude or refined state.

Footsteps were coming nearer, from the eastern side, in a shuffling sort of gait, keeping time to a whistled accompaniment of "Muldoon the Solid Man."

Suddenly a figure dove out of the darkness, and then:

"Black yer boots? Make 'm shine,
Costs you but a half a dime.
Touch yer corns up like a feather,
Make a mirror of yer leather!"

"Shine 'em, mister?"

"Well, I don't mind," Oliver Mortimer replied, stepping into the light, shed by a gas lamp. "Mind that you do a good job, though."

"Shure, an' it's niver an ondacent job ye'll see me l'ave at all!" and the youth went upon his knees before his customer, with alacrity.

He was a strange-looking fellow, to say the least, and Oliver Mortimer surveyed him, with a twinkle of amusement in his gray eyes.

No boy, evidently, was this manipulator of the blacking brush, for he was nearly a man in stature, though it was hard to judge of his years because of the smut and grime upon his keen face, the eyes of which resembled lumps of coal-diamonds.

His garments were ragged and ill-fitting, the pants being several sizes too large, and the coat as much too small, and they, too, seemed to have inherited some of the grime that was upon his visage.

A remnant of what had once been a "nobby" silk cap was his head-covering, the "scoop" being turned up a la Dutch comedian.

And could the face have been sufficiently washed, Oliver Mortimer concluded the boot-black would not have been unhandsome.

"Cum down ter see ther elerfant, hev you?" the "shiner" demanded, as he polished away.

"Yes, I did come for that purpose," was the reply.

"Jest got in on ther excursion?"

"Yes."

"Tho't so. Stranger, ain't ye?"

"I am, true enough."

"From Bosting?"

"No; from Toledo."

"Toledo? Phew! I tho't sure you was frum Bosting, by the mutton-chops o' yourn. Them Bosting chaps calculate they're a peg higher'n we citizens o' Philly, but they ain't. They've got 'culchaw,' but we've got ther elerfant."

Oliver Mortimer smiled.

He saw that his voluble "black" was disposed to be talkative.

"I suppose so," he replied. "Are there many visitors here, now?"

"You bet. Huckster-cart loads of 'em. Never been here afore?"

"No."

"Then ye wanten look out. There's more 'peelers' here than I ever see'd afore."

"More peelers?"

"Yes—light-fingered kleptomanyacks, 'confiders,' 'cribbers' an' 'grabbers.' A feller's got ter keep an' eye out or they'll steal even his good looks."

"Well, that is bad. What is your name?"

"Maloney, fer short, or Boss Bob, jest as ye please. The b'hoys call me Boss Bob, 'ca'se I generally boss this puttickler department o' industry. My father's Terrance Maloney, a cop once, but now boss coke-heaver, down at the lower gas works. Me mother's a Dutch cat-fish peddler, whom ye'll see wid a tray forinst the top av her head, an' when she gits purtly full on lager, she kin scoop ther top o' Terrance's skull off wid a brickbat, shure. As fer myself, I'm a straight-grained Yank, ther master o' 'a dozen different brogues, the solid Muldoon in a fight, an' ready fer ennything thet cums along, honest."

"Well, Bob, who is that individual yonder?" and Oliver Mortimer pointed into a gloomy part of the great bridge, where the faint outlines of a human figure were discernible.

"Oh! that's the Nondescript," Boss Bob replied, airily. "He and I generally tramp together, you know. He's mum, is the Nondescript—I do all the talkin' an' he salts it away. He's got a memory like a telegraph-pole, an' when ye cum to fightin' he can lick any chap of his size. He's a ferret, too, is the Nondescript, ef he is queer, an' knows his P's an' Q's."

By this time one boot was done up in admirable style, the polish being faultless.

"Good enough," the man from Toledo said, approvingly. "I see you understand your business. Do you get out this early, every morning, Bob?"

"Most generally, unless it rains. The 'arly worm ketches the bird, sez the poet, an' I most allus makes a half a dollar afore I dine."

"Are you well acquainted around town, then?"

"An' I? Well, I reckon! Nondescript an' I knows every corner an' rat-hole frum north ter south, an' east ter west. Ef tha'r any one ye want to find, jest mention his or her signature, an' deposit yer collateral, an' here's what'll guide ye. Ef ye want an' introducter Stokely, Hartranft, Goshorn, Hawley or Dom Pedro, jest call on me, fer I'm personally acquainted w' them roosters, an' then ther's 'Lyssus Grant, a favorite o' mine, who kin be reached thru me. Ef 'Lyssus wants a shine, he sits down an' telegraphs to me, an' either I or ther Nondescript responds."

Oliver Mortimer laughed, outright.

The boy appeared so earnest, and his story was so broad, that it tickled this man from Toledo.

"Perhaps you know Morton Prescott, then?" he said, amusedly.

"Prescott! Prescott?" repeated Boss Bob, pausing to scratch his head. "Let me see—keeps a big importin' establishment down on Second street, don't he?"

"Yes, that's the man."

"Then, I twig him—course I do! He's purty square sort of a rooster—a leetle close w' his collateral, but no h-o-g, fer all. Luks kinder down in the mouth, lately. His paper ain't worth much, I guess—financial embarrassment, you see—" and the King of Bootblacks brushed away industriously at the refractory boot, with a knowing nod.

Oliver Mortimer whistled slowly.

This street Arab was a mystery to him.

What he did not appear to know, was seemingly very little.

"Come down to see Morton on biz, I s'pect," Bob went on, volubly.

"No, not exactly. I expect to meet an English barrister, here—Colonel Rutherford by name."

"Oh!" Bob accepted, and became suddenly mum. And as the Toledoan did not manifest any further disposition to continue the conversation, little more was said.

The boot soon shone like a mirror, and Boss Bob's tools went into his box. "Heer's my keerd, mister," he said, as he reached it forth, at the same time receiving a nickel. "Ef ye evyer come my way, ye'll generally find me or the Nondescript thar, after midnight. Mornin' to ye."

"Good-morning," Oliver Mortimer said, seizing his satchel, and hurrying on across the bridge.

Boss Bob, in his crouching position, gazed after him until his footsteps became inaudible, long after he had disappeared from view; then he scratched his frowzy head, and arose to his feet with a sigh.

"Heigh ho! thet's the way et goes. Jest as I was gittin' interested in that chap, he's (ff like a skyrocket. Hello! he's dropped something! Nondescript?"

The figure came forward, quickly—a burly, thick-set youth, of seventeen years, whose face strikingly resembled the countenance of an owl, the eyes being large and round, the nose hooked, and a hairy substance covering the owl-shaped face.

Like the bootblack king, he was poorly clad, and looked as if he had slept in a coal-lin.

Where the Toledoan had stood, something white lay upon the bridge.

"Pick it up," Boss Bob said, directing the Nondescript's attention to it.

The youth promptly obeyed.

"Keep it, and give it to the chap who jest walzed off," Bob said. "Did you memorize him?"

The Nondescript nodded, his big eyes growing brilliant in their expression.

"All right. Cme along, then. We'll see how maters look up at the Pennsylvania."

The Nondescript stowed the package of papers he had picked up, in an inner pocket of his ragged coat; then, with their boxes in hand the strange pair made their way across the bridge to the West Philadelphia side, and to the Pennsylvania depot, two squares above.

The gloom was lessening enough so that the grim house-tops and spires of the old city were growing discernible.

A car on the Chestnut street "all night" line was just tinkling on its way eastward. Policemen went to stir from their respective doorways; milk wagons and grocery deliveries were just crawling out; soon the bustle of another day in the great Centennial city would greet the hearing of the many strangers within its confines—the thrill of anticipation again to enter many and many an eager heart.

A glance within the specious waiting-rooms of the depot, revealed a scene at once peculiar and suggestive of what a people will endure for the sake of satisfying their curiosity and desire to see.

A hundred or more people of both sexes and all ages were there, eagerly waiting for the dawn of their first eventful day at the Centennial—many of them as yet unprovided with a stopping-place during their stay.

Here sat an aged couple whose years numbered close upon four-score years and ten; they had come thousands of miles to see the "show," and, wearied by their long ride, had fallen asleep, with their heads pillowed together.

Here, a fidgety couple, many years younger, whose troubles have just begun, evidently, judging by the suspicious way they regard their neighbors in the next seat, and hang upon their pocket-books. In their estimation, every black-mustached stranger is a pick-pocket.

Here is a young married couple from the extreme rural "deestricts," who are munching their first Centennial peanuts, that cost the bashful young Benedict ten cents for a whole quart! Dog cheap, neow!

"Black yer boots, make 'em shine,
Only costs you half a dime,
Touch yer corns up like a feather,
Make a mirror of yer leather!"

"Shine 'em, mister?"

"Waal, neow, I don't know. How much, d'ye say?"

"Five cents! Jest let me tackle them daisies o' yours, senator. I'll make 'em shine like a forty-dollar diamond, so they'll reflect a hull mirage of ther Centennial grounds."

"Pshaw! Ye don't say?"

"I will, darn my buttons! When ye want ter comb yer hair, all ye'll have ter do is ter luk at yer feet for yer fortygraff."

"Waal, go ahead. Five cents ain't much ter lose, when taller brings eight cents a pound!"

And the shine was satisfactorily performed in a jiffy—and a dozen more; for, where the man who wanted to tread upon the great Centennial aisles, with unpolished feet?

A wearied mother paced the floor, with a fretful babe in her arms.

"Say, missus, here's an antedote fer that youngster!" and from the pockets of Boss Bob came some rather mussy candied sweetness; but it sufficed to quiet the child, and make one mother thankful.

"Come, Nondescript; no more tin here! Away we go fer a fresh lay!"

CHAPTER II.

ALBERT ALBERTS, AND HIS TERMS.

UPON the first day of January, 1876, several months prior to the opening of the Centennial, Morton Prescott stood upon the steps of his mammoth wholesale importing and jobbing house, on Second street, a ruined man.

Once a millionaire, but now no richer than the common day-laborer, from which position he had once before sprung to wealth and affluence. For five years he had been a prominent merchant, a popular citizen, and had honorably occupied several positions and city offices of trust; his philanthropy had often been the subject of remark, and yet he had amassed large wealth—just how much nobody ever knew, but something over a million, said the wise ones.

All had gone well, and he had prospered, and rejoiced in having one of the largest trades in his line, in the sturdy Quaker City, until he was drawn into the toils, consequent upon first lessons in gambling in stocks.

Of course he lost—not only once, but time and again, for he was attacked with the same infatuation that has bled many a man of a round fortune, and prepared him for a harder life afterward.

Of course he lost; only once in a great while does a "greenhorn" win.

Go into Third street of Philadelphia or Wall street of New York, and you may have pointed out to you men who have served a life's apprenticeship, and spent several fortunes, ere they were able to "conquer the demon."

Piece by piece Morton Prescott's money had melted away, until his several bank balances had all vanished; then his row of business structures went, upon sale, to satisfy his insatiable greed for stock gambling.

One piece of property after another followed suit, until on the first day of January—that memorably strange exultant day in Philadelphia, which thousands of clamorous bells, guns and voices had ushered in with horrible din—he had awakened to the fact that he was the absolute owner of—nothing!

To be sure, he still retained possession of the mammoth importing house, but both that and his magnificent residence on Oxford street, near Broad, were mortgaged for their full value.

Some there were who knew nothing of this stress of affairs—many, indeed, in so great a city, for the papers had failed to expose the calamity; but his paper was not wanted in financial circles, and business men, in the main, regarded Prescott as a poor man.

Leaving his office upon this foggy, cloudy New Year's morning, when a vapor pregnant with excitement, tin horns, flags and gunpowder

seemed to hang over all objects, the merchant walked down to Market street, and through that crowded thoroughfare to Broad street, giving little heed to the gorgeous display of flags, bunting and patriotic decorations that an enthusiastic people embellished their homes and buildings with.

At Broad and Market he took a cab, and gave the directions, and in less than twenty minutes was landed before what he had once been proud to call his home.

Mounting the steps and ringing the bell, he was speedily admitted by a colored man-servant in livery.

"Where will I find Pearl and Sylvia, Hagatt?" the merchant demanded, throwing off his great-coat, and brushing his long beard before the pier-glass.

"Spect you'll find 'em in de library, sah," Hagatt replied, respectfully. "Show you up, sah?"

"No, I can find them myself, I guess," the merchant replied, ascending the stairs.

An elegantly appointed and furnished place was the library, and here Morton Prescott found his wife and daughter. Pearl, the latter mentioned, was a charming maiden of seventeen summers, of winsome manners, and refined appearance, in which haughtiness or cold vanity was not to be found.

Petite of figure, and graceful, she possessed purely chiseled features, rose-tinted with happy health—hair that shone like golden glimmer—eyes whose sparkle was like the diamonds upon her fingers.

A stylish dresser and accomplished in conversation, music, and drawing, Pearl Prescott was a daughter of whom the merchant had just reason to be proud.

Sylvia, Morton Prescott's second wife, was also young, having seen only four-and-twenty years of life, but, unlike her step-daughter, was vain, supercilious and arrogant. The merchant had found this out to his cost, but he submitted to her petty tyranny without remonstrance. As a general thing, she kept a civil tongue in her head, even if by various acts she betrayed her nature.

A tall, magnificent blonde, of comely proportions, pretty face, and magnetic presence, she was universally admired by men and envied by women. Some said that her antecedents were obscure, and that she had only married Morton Prescott for his money and position; others said she was the daughter of English aristocracy and the heiress to an earldom; but Morton Prescott, perhaps, was the only man who knew the truth or falsity of either report.

She dressed gorgeously, and queened it in society, and few took pains to inquire into her antecedents, having unlimited faith in the saying, "Gold, goodness and beauty go together."

Both ladies were seated in the library, reading, when the merchant entered, but looked up, inquiringly, into his pale, haggard face.

"All is lost!" he replied, faintly, in answer to the interrogative look. "I ventured my last, and lost. We are paupers!"

An exclamation came from both ladies, and Pearl was by the merchant's side in an instant, her arms around his neck.

"Oh! papa, you do not really mean what you say?"

"Every word of it. We are penniless—and just when the grandest chance of my career of speculation dawns before my gaze."

"Tell me how you mean, papa?"

"A report from London has just reached me, of a coming crash in silks and laces. A leading house is going to 'drop bottom' within ten days, and their stock can be bought at a tremendous sacrifice. It makes me wild when I realize that the chance must slip by me. There is now an active market here for silks and all foreign importations, and although the prices may not advance materially, the coming Exposition will increase the sales to fabulous figures, and were I now in the same financial condition that I was two years ago, I'd send to Schofel, and have him lump off the entire stock, low enough so that I could thribble on the net profits here."

And rising, the troubled merchant paced to and fro, excitedly, across the floor, his brows knitted perplexedly.

"Oh! papa! If you only had the money, or could raise it," Pearl said, clasping her hands, prettily, and studying the figures in the plush carpet upon the floor. "If—if you could only mortgage the—"

"Mortgage!" the merchant exclaimed, sharply. "Why, my child, everything is already mortgaged—this house and contents, the warehouse—everything!"

"Have you no further credit, Morton?" the second Mrs. Prescott languidly inquired, from the depths of the great easy-chair.

"No credit—no nothing!" was the despairing reply. "My paper would not sell for twenty-five cents on the dollar, to-day, in Third avenue."

"Oh! dear! what shall we do? It will be such a disgrace—such a talk there will be. For heaven's sake, Morton, do something to avert the—the terrible disgrace from my poor shoulders. I shall never go into society again."

"If society would only refund what we—you and I—have squandered upon it, madame, poor papa could again hold up his head, on Second and Third, and sell his paper at par!" Pearl flashed, indignantly.

"To be sure, my dear child, but, really, you know, we have barely been able to keep up to the times, on your father's meager income," Mrs. Prescott drawled, affectedly. "Ah! me, if I only had my earldom in my control."

"Yes, if you *only* had!" Pearl sighed, the least bit sarcastically.

"Morton, dear, you really *must* do something for me, or I shall have to send for Le Grande, to console me."

"If that affected puppy ever crosses my threshold again, Sylvia, I will kick him out upon the street!" the merchant declared, angrily.

Then he turned to Pearl.

"I see but one way out of the dilemma—know of but one source of aid, promising success in securing this bonanza of the year," he said, with thoughtful graveness, born of desperation.

"Ah! tell me, then, if there is hope. If I can be of any use, command me, and I will not refuse!" the girl said, eagerly, earnestly.

"You promise this, my child?"

"I swear it, if necessary!" Pearl replied, bravely.

"Then, I will tell you of whom I propose to seek relief—Dr. Alberts!"

"Papa!" in alarm.

"Nay! do not interrupt me!" the merchant replied. "I know what you would say—he is an unscrupulous Jew, of whom many dark reports are circulated. But, I do not fear for this. He is the only man in Philadelphia with whom I can deal on credit. He perhaps has access to more ready cash than any other man in the city, for he not only owns countless properties, but is treasurer and banker for many Jewish firms. He may be a modern merchant of Venice, but I shall deal with him as cautiously as I would with a rattlesnake. I will go at once, and learn what terms I can make with him."

"Oh! papa, I fear to have you deal with that man. He is unprincipled—a villain. Twice he has insulted me in the street, by stopping me, and declaring his ardent admiration of myself. Once you are under obligations to him, will his unwelcome attentions not turn to actual persecution?"

"No! I will see to that. As a Jew, he can never enter my house. On the street I will see that he never insults you. If I can get a half a million of him, in clean cash, I am once more made."

An hour later, in the dingy pawnbroker's shop of Dr. Albert Alberts, Morton Prescott stood before that personage, and made known his wants.

Alberts eyed him, sharply, with his keen gray eyes, that seemed to be the mirrors of an evil soul.

He was a thin, wiry fellow of thirty-five, with swarthy complexion, an extremely large nose and mouth, pearly-white teeth, gray eyes, and black hair as straight as an Indian's, despite his Jewish origin. He dressed richly, however, and there were four rings of gold set with diamonds and other rare jewels, upon several fingers of his two hands.

"You want haff a million of tollars, eh?" he repeated, when Morton Prescott had made known his errand. "You want haff a million of tollars, andt you pe Morton Prescott, t'e Second street merchant?"

"Exactly. I am known to-day, in financial circles, as a ruined man. I have barely enough money in my pocket to purchase a good cigar—such as I used to smoke. And, now, when to-tally wrecked of fortune, a chance looms up before me to make money. A half a million of dollars will set me upon footing again—square up the mortgages upon my estates, and give me a full hundred thousand to work upon. You have money—you must help me!"

"I must, Mister Prescott?"

"You must, sir."

"Vell, I take your word for it. What security can you give?"

"None. I have not a dollar's worth of actual property in the world."

"An' yet you vant dem haff million, all de same?"

"I do—must have them!"

Alberts scratched his head; the gleam in his eyes was very cunning.

"I dream about dose," he said, with a grim chuckle. "Two minutes, I come back."

Then he entered a room in the rear of the shop, and locked the door.

In just two minutes, by a shelf-clock in the store, he reappeared, bearing in his hands a small iron-bound box, and a bunch of curiously-wrought keys.

"Mister Prescott," he said, "you ish an honest mans. I don't vas like to see you go rob some bank, an' go to brison for it. So I helps you. Here ish von paper. It reads:

"PHILADELPHIA, Pa., Jan. 1, 1876.
"This is to certify that my father, Morton Prescott, of said city and State, has, in my presence, on said date, borrowed of Albert Alberts, One Half Million Dollars, in U. S. Currency, the same to be paid back to said Albert Alberts, by said Morton Prescott, in my presence, at the pawnbroker shop of said Albert Alberts, upon the 10th day of September, 1876, at one minute before twelve o'clock, A. M."

"But if, by any way, shape or manner, said Morton Prescott, of first part, fails to comply with the terms of this agreement in paying back the loan, principal and interest, I, Pearl Prescott, daughter of said Morton Prescott, do solemnly swear to deliver myself and person up unto said Albert Alberts, in Christian marriage, at any time said Albert Alberts may order, after twelve o'clock, A. M., September 10th, 1876. To all of which I do agree, and affix hereunto my signature, on this, the first day of January, A. D., 1876."

"Signed, _____"

CHAPTER III.

PEARL'S DECISION—THE MORTGAGE SIGNED.

"You takes dat to your young daughter," Alberts said, with a villainous smile, "and if she is willing to assist you so much ash I am, she vill come pack mit you, an' sign t'e leetle agreement! See!—an' den I gives you dis haff million tollars, shust like it was your own, undil der tenth of September!"

"My heaven, man, you are a second Merchant of Venice!" the speculator gasped, faintly. He had heard every word uttered by this crafty, scheming German-Jew, and the significance filled his heart with a great horror. "If I should find it impossible to meet my obligation on the precise day and minute thereof, you—you—"

"I foreclose mine mortgage, you pet!" was the prompt reply, there being a spice of devilish triumph in the man's tone. "I ish no Merchant of Venice, Mister Prescott—I do dish to brotect myself and my monish. I shust as lief haff t'e money ash de girl, or de girl ash de money—bodd's is der difference."

Morton Prescott took a turn about the little shop, laboring in a state of great excitement.

It was the most astounding thing he had ever heard of—this proposition of the Jewish man of money, and, yet—

To accept the terrible terms seemed the distressed merchant's only salvation, in a pecuniary sense.

"With the half a million, Schofel could purchase the 'crash'—ay, with a quarter million or less, perhaps, and with the remaining quarter I could redeem the mortgages against my residence and warehouse. Then, if the cargo reached me about the first of July, I am confident I can get at least thrice what it cost me, and thus pay off this Jew-devil's loan. But, will Pearl consent to the terms? She said if I could use her, to do so! Ah! heaven! I'd see her dead before Alberts should ever lay claim to her!"

Thus the merchant mused, as he paced to and fro, Alberts the meanwhile watching him like a hawk.

"Vell, Mister Prescott, vat you say?" he demanded, finally, jingling the keys he held in his hand. "Can you find von easier way to raise haff a million?"

"No; nor a harder one, for that matter," the merchant replied, grimly. "Give me the paper, and I will see my child. If she is willing to risk the sacrifice, I will come back. If not, you may put your money box away."

"Very well, Mister Prescott—I look for you pack, to-morrow morning, accompanied by your sharming daughter. Good-tay!"

"Good-day, sir," Morton Prescott said, as he left the office, and once more emerged into the festive New Year's scene.

Crowded were the streets with eager sight-seers, but the merchant elbowed his way along, and in half an hour, stood before his daughter,

in her private sitting-room, which was a model of taste and thorough elegance, in the way of arrangement and furnishing.

"Pearl, you promised I might command you, did I need to use you?" the merchant said, gravely.

"Yes, papa," yet there came into Pearl's brown eyes a light of surprise not unmingled with alarm.

"Then read that," Prescott said, extending the Jew's paper. "That will tell you upon what terms I can borrow a half a million, and it now remains for you to, or not to append your signature—just as you believe may be for the best."

With hands that perceptibly trembled, Pearl Prescott received the document, and bore it to the light, that she might read it.

The merchant watched her gravely, anxiously—hopefully.

To him her decision was all in all; it was to decide whether he was destined to have a standing amongst his fellow-men, once more, or whether he was to travel hand in hand with uncertain, unreliable fate.

From a roseate tint of health the shade grew to the hue of the white waxen lily upon Pearl's face; her eyes assumed an expression of unutterable horror and loathing, as she read; the paper dropped from her nerveless grasp, to the floor, as she turned to the father who was awaiting her answer.

"Father, I said you might use me! Tell me—will you pay that borrowed money back, when it comes due?"

"Good God helping me, I will. If I cannot make the amount out of the London crash, I will raise it some other way. You shall be redeemed!"

"I believe you; more, I will depend upon your father's love to save your child. Stay! I will get my wraps, and we will go at once."

"No—not until to-morrow. To-day is the nation's day—the first eventful one of the Centennial year. To-morrow will do as well, for this business."

Accordingly they waited upon Albert Alberts, M. D., on the following morning, at ten o'clock.

The German-Jew was behind his counter, a wily smile upon his homely features.

The paper was duly signed and delivered; then the Jew unlocked the iron box, and in clean gold and greenbacks, counted out one half million of dollars, and laid them at Morton Prescott's disposal.

"There ish your monish—here ish my pay, perhaps," he said with a sinister smile, and a nod toward Pearl, who shrunk away, in terror. "I pid you good-tay, Mister Prescott! Von happy New Year, Miss Prescott, for yesterday!"

Later that day, Morton Prescott deposited his loan in different banks; and a cablegram flashed across the Atlantic to Gustave Schofel, 33 Strand, London:

"Two hundred and fifty thousand dollars deposited in _____ Banks, by me, subject to your order. Catch the crash. MORTON PRESCOTT."

And in ten days came back:

"I have caught it for \$100,000. The clearing up will not admit of the cargo touching your port before August. SCHOFEI."

August!

Usually a dreamy month in staid old Philadelphia, but not so this Centennial year.

"Black yer boots, make 'em shine,
Only costs you half a dime;
Touch yer corns up like a feather,
Make 'r mirror of yer leather."

"Shine 'm, mister!"

Down upon his knees went the King of Bootblacks, nor did he 'let up,' until he had performed a round twenty shines.

It was early in the forenoon—moreover, it was Jersey day!

Long before daylight had spread its cheerfulness over the City of Homes, the street cars began to bear loads of living freight westward ho! and the steam cars bore their invoice of "Jersey" folk from every nook and corner of the State of sand and watermelons. And, long before the turn-stiles began working, to admit the 67,000 visitors of New Jersey's famous day, throngs of people were congregated on the outside of the inclosure, upon Elm and Belmont avenues.

Many famous artists have we in our patriotic American land, but none of them did their smartest to picture these vast concourses of Centennial visitors. Only one who was "thar" constantly can recall to memory what a mon-

ster album of strangely-contrasted faces was in one of those crowds, and yet you might search a week, and never find any two just alike.

Pretty faces, homely faces, "character" faces—here, there, everywhere. Men and women of every civilized and many uncivilized nations, and as many different tongues and tones—a heterogeneous mixture of a mighty world's people.

Bootblacks now had their harvest before the gates were open—not a few, but a swarm of them whose numerical count could not be estimated—a dirty, ragged, impudent, dare-devil, irrepressible army of them, of whom an artist might make a study for a hundred genre pictures.

As a rule, the most successful of these Centennial artists were the class who were the "sassiest," cheekiest, and tongueiest, although the pale-faced, intellectual lad yonder, whose apparent timidity announces that this is his first attempt,—he will catch not a little patronage of those people who—proudly may it be said—are ever searing up subjects of charity and compassion. There is not much "fight" in the boy, but the doubtful, sad expression in his brown eyes fights its way to the tender heart of humanity better than fists or words could do. Trace that lad, at the conclusion of his weary day's struggle with fortune, to his home—what a revelation might we not exume! A pale but intelligent-looking mother sits in a cheerless apartment, and plies a weary needle, when even the pangs of hunger may be gnawing at her vitals; she has no money—no husband whose strong hands may support her—only her little boy! But the fire of patriotic enthusiasm burns strong in her bosom; she came to see the Centennial—has seen it—will see more of it; for, within those great acres of exhibitions, she is carried away with admiration and wonder; what she sees there of God's great works amply repays her for what she suffers from want.

"Black yer boots, make 'em shine
Costs you only half a dime."

"Shine 'em, mister. Jest let me wrassle wi' them shapely quaits o' yourn, an' ef I can't make 'em luk like a forty-dollar mirror, I'll set up ther peanuts, you bet! Tell ye what I did, once, mister, ef it'll be any inducement, an' ye needn't believe it ef ye don't want'er. A feller he telegraphed ter me thet thar war a feller down in Jarsey who hed never had his feet blacked—that is, his boots, ye see. He'd allus been brought up on watermelons, salt-water clams, shuck eyesters, an' sech like, an' his feet war so big thet ef cost more fer blackin' ter give his boots a good decent shine, than ther sale o' his hull crop o' melons cum to. So this feller who telegraphed me, he took compass on ther Jarseyman, an' offered me fifty dollars ter go down an' shine 'em, bein's I ar' ther King and High-Low-Jack o' this puttickler branch o' industry. Waal, ter cut a short story long, as ther novelists say, I packed my kit an' waited on thet Jarseyman."

"Result: absence from this moral hemisfear of a hundred pounds o' Bixby's best an' six brushes. But, you lein't no Jarseyman, stranger; no, sir—ee—not you! An' your pumps are suggestive o' aristocracy an' refinement. So I'll knock the price clear down fer this time, and charge you only half a dime. Take it in time an' it comes in rhyme. Shine 'm, mister!"

Of course the speaker was Boss Bob.

He had cleared a quarter, square, from the finish of one job, and planted himself in front of a tall, richly-dressed and aristocratic-looking stranger, who had paused before the great main entrance to the Trans-Continental Hotel, to look about him.

At first a frown of annoyance came upon the handsome face of the man, who was clearly a foreigner, and he raised his formidable walking-stick, threateningly. But as the irrepressible king of the brush rattled on at a rapid rate, not apparently the least disposed to "give it up so," the cane gradually slipped to the stranger's side, and a faint smile came to his mustache-shaded lips.

The faint smile increased to a broad one by the time Boss Bob had paused for breath, and the stranger's shapely but dusty boot went forward upon the box.

"Black away, my lad," he said, with something like a chuckle. "You've at least learned your lingo perfectly. Give my boots a first-class shine and I'll pay you a first-class price—the London price, by the way."

"Bet I will!" Boss Bob replied, settling to his work quickly. "So you're a London rooster, be you? Know'd ye warn't no Jarseyman, by

ther size o' yer feet an' float o' yer jibboom. Tell a Jarseyman fur's I can see 'im. That acka-line nose an' Rochambeau tater-trap o' yourn an' better'n a family history. Little French mixed up wi' yer Brit, ain't there?"

"Yes, a trifle, I dare say," was the reply. "Be lively, now, young man. The gate: will soon open, and I want to get in ahead of the field."

"Oh, you're one o' them fast hosses, be ye?—a reg'lar fox-chaser! I've re'd about sum o' you fiery John Bullions, I have! But, I tell you what it is, Johnny, old Uncle Sam is jest scoop-in' it to all ther b'yees this deal. Never see'd sech a sarcus over on ther island like that, did ye?" and the eyes of the bootblack wandered triumphantly across the thronged avenue to the Main Building and its next great brother, Machinery Hall.

"No, my friend; I'll acknowledge that this exposition surpasses anything on record," the man from London responded, with a smile.

"I know'd it," Bob declared, elated at his victory. "I sed you wasn't no clam-fatted Jarseyman, the minnit I spied ye. I'm a purty good guesser, generally, an' whin I twigged yer main-top-sail, an' reefed yer yard-arm ter ther breeze, sed I to myself, thet ain't Grant, Bedle, Hartranft, ner John Wanamaker, 'case his lower jaw's too clean; but sez I, that feller's name is Colonel Rutherford."

The stranger gave a sudden start, and gazed at the bootblack in great surprise.

"By Jove!" he said, after a prolonged whistle. "How in the name of common sense did you learn my name, boy? I deemed my presence unknown."

"Then, you're the colonel?"

"Of course I am. Tell me, where did you ever hear my name?"

"That's for me ter know an' you ter guess, I 'spect," the king replied, with a chuckle. "If yer collateral is flush, mebbe I'll tell you."

"There! the turn-stiles are open; I must go," the colonel said, hastily. "But, I must see you again, boy—where?"

"I generally have some visitin' cards about my duds," Bob said, and at last fished out a dirty slip of paper from one of his pockets, upon which was rudely scrawled in penciled chirography:

"Boss Bob, Schuykill River, Bines & Scheaff's Coal-us, Bin 12—Hard—Large Nut. Squeal 'Keno,' in falsetto voice.—B. B."

CHAPTER IV.

BOSS BOB MAKES A NEW ACQUAINTANCE.

The next minute the stranger had seized the interesting card, and was gone, with the crowd. Rising to his feet, with his "kit" in hand, Boss Bob gazed after him.

"Well, now, ef that ain't ther tallest sorter 'coon I ever see'd, I don't steal no more lame cats fer old Snyder, the sassage grinder. Never paid me a Centennial red, he didn't, fer all I twigged his signature, an' give him a reg'lar London polish. An' he sed he'd give me London pay. Ef that's ther sort o' collateral they've over on John Bull's side, I want no more of it. But, maybe he's honest, an' absent-minded. Seen sech 'coons, afore this. Say, Nondescript?"

The boy approached from where he had just finished a polishing job.

"Ye see'd thet foreigner I war jest shinin'?" the King of Bootblacks demanded.

The boy nodded.

"I thort ye did. I see'd yer big optics squandered this way. Know who't was?"

The boy shook his head in the negative.

"Well, Nondescript, thet was Colonel Rutherford from Hengland. He be an aristocrat, thet snoozer be, an' if ye twig his jib, ag'in, jest accost him, five cents' worth, on my account. Mebbe he fergot all about ther collateral—maybe! These 'ere distinguished individuals generally hev hull huckster-cart loads of it stored away—in their minds."

A train had just arrived from New York, at the branch depot, upon Elm avenue, and people were pouring from it into the street, to join in the restless surging tide of humanity that streamed continuously through the busy turn-stiles, in to the Exposition.

Men, women, children—from nearly every State and territory, the New Jerseyans, to-day, of course predominating, swarmed in a mass that even the policeman found hard to break.

"Hello! something's the row over yonder," Boss Bob said, grasping the Nondescript by the arm, and pointing toward the main entrance to the grounds. "Let's take a look."

Across the street they sprang, and soon formed one of a circle of curious persons who had

formed a sort of ring around an irate Yankee, whose voice it was which had attracted the attention of Boss Bob.

A brawny six-footer was the stranger, with an undisputable Yankee face, the lower part of which was covered with a thick stubble of sandy beard; the nose was extremely long, the eyes brown, and now flashing; the mouth ludicrously large, the corners being stained with tobacco-juice; the hair long and tangled, and of a towy color.

A subject for an artist was the stranger, as he stood in the center of the group, swinging his clenched fists about in a free manner—a typical greenhorn, clad in homespun, stogy boots, and a battered, old-fashioned "plug" hat, while he wore a flaring red necktie about his throat, and a full blown poppy in his button-hole.

A titter of amusement escaped Boss Bob as he saw the countryman, and he nudged the Nondescript, shyly.

"Look out, now, pard; heer's a greenhorn, in distress, an' mebbe we'll hev some fun. If he's half as green and gawkey as he looks, he can be sold out, dog cheap."

"I want'er see that darn-nation mean skunk who stole my ten dollars," the countryman vociferated, excited to such a pitch as to be upon the point of crying. "I say I want tew fasten on tew him. I've been robbed, feller-citizens—boldy robbed in broad daylight, arter comin' all the way down heer ter visit this plaguey Centennial. Oh! ye needn't laff; thar ain't nothin' ter laff about. Ten dollars ain't picked off frum every gooseberry bush, not by a long shot, an' I jest want'er get a grab at thet ornery skunk who stole my ten dollars—that's what ails Sarah Jane. My name's Joshua Evergreen, if ye want ter know who I am, an' I'm a citizen o' Plunkit, Vermont. An' my pair o' yearlin' steers is a-goin' ter take ther prize at the Live Stock show, tew boot. An' I didn't come down heer ter be imposed on, or laffed at. Mebbe I luk a leetle green, an' my eddication hain't so prime as sum o' you city chaps, but, when ye cum down tew the solid facts, I'll bet I can lick any one o' ye, with one hand tied ahind my back."

"Oh! thet chap's warmin' up," Bob observed to the Nondescript. "Guess he's got ther muscle ter back what he sez, too, by ther looks o' his statter."

"Tell us how you came to lose your money, sir?" a clerical-looking man said, addressing the Yankee. "Perhaps we can find it."

"Of course ye could, if ye was a mind tew," Joshua averred, confidently. "Ye see, I hedn't no change ter put inter ther turn-stile, an' so I asked a spruce sorter chap if he could change a bill fer me, an' he sed if I'd wait right here two minnits, he'd take the bill an' git it changed fer me. An' heer I've stood, half an hour, an' the dirty mean skunk hain't cum back, yet!"

A murmur of significance escaped from the lips of those of the spectators who were native Philadelphians. There was no doubt in their minds but what the man from Vermont spoke the truth, for this was no unusual occurrence.

Nightly and daily these accommodating rascals, known as "confiders," plied their bold game, successfully. They were always near the turn-stiles or in front of the theaters, ready to get money changed or to buy tickets for any visitor to the city, who did not "know the ropes," and it is unnecessary to add that the occasions were often. Hundreds of timid and trusting ones, whom the general crowd could not or would not bother with, when in need of change, but without that commodity, would give their bills to one of these polite "confiders," who had already "spotted" them, and off he would go, through the crowd, and the dupes would not see him or their money again, as the accommodating party ever took care to hide himself to some other fat pose, probably sending a pal back to look out for other victims. These "confiders" were here, there, everywhere, and the havoc they wrought was great, in the pecuniary possessions of Centennial visitors, who were too fresh to be wary and watchful.

"I'll bet a hoss I know who the snoozer was, who bled the Evergreen-horn," Boss Bob said, from his position. "He's bin hangin' around here, doing the accommodatin', every day fer a week, an' I know it."

"Ah! you're the young man we want to see, then," the gentleman said, who had first manifested interest in Joshua Evergreen's behalf. "What sort of a person is the man you refer to?"

"Oh! he's a gallus 'coon, an' don't ye fergit it," Bob assured, eying his interrogator, sharply, and making him out to be a clerical party,

of five and forty—one of those benevolent souls every in search of somebody to comfort and assist. "He's a tall, slim feller, w'at never was brought up on eyesters an' salt-water clams, an' he's a luk as if he might jest as well bin a gal, ef natur' hadn't willed different by stickin' a few sickly yaller hairs on his upper lip. His nose ar' thin an' peaked, like as ef he was blessed with a mother-in-law, an' his mouth would make a good target fer a Gattlin gun. He wairs goggles, sumtimes, over his eyes, an' sumtimes he don't. He dresses like a clerk in a milliner store, an' walks wi' a cane, wot's got a statter of old Neptune on ther handle-end. That's the chap I mean, sir—parts his hair in the middle, an' calls himself Charles Augustus Rothschild Fitz Noodle, when he's in a burry, addin' in seven more, when thar ain't no cops near."

"I sw'ar if that ain't the very skunk, young feller," Joshua Evergreen declared, excitedly. "Had a squeaky voice, didn't he?"

"Yes—a falsetter voice—a cross twixt a Thomas cat's an' a cat-fish vender's."

"The very chap, by hokey! I say, sonny, did you see that feller?"

"Reckon I did, while ago. Used to know him when he slept in the next coal-bin to me, on warm nights, but he's graddywated since that, an' every time we meet, he tries ter poke ther planet o' Jupiter wi' his nose. 'Stonishin' what money will do!"

"Then, if you think you know the man, why not assist the loser, here, in hunting him up, and handing him over to the authorities?" suggested the clerical party.

"S'pose I might; Evergreen-horn, he's got heaps o' collateral, fer instance."

"By goll that will be all right, sonny," the Vermonter declared. "Jest you show me that skunk who tuk off wi' my ten dollars, an' I'll take ye inter the show, free o' charge, an' buy the soda water, too—gosh hang'd if I won't! I hain't got much stamps along, but dad's got lots up at Plunkit, an' he's fatten' five shoats ter butcher, too. I ain't no hog, on small matters, an' I generally try ter do the square by a feller, even ef I have ter give him my terbaccer-box."

And here the Yankee grinned broadly, at his supposed facetiousness.

"Well, come along, Josh," Boss Bob said, with a grimace, as he picked up his kit. "Trot along wi' me, an' we'll waltz down around the Rialter, an' see if wi' a leetle figgerin' we can't spot his nibs."

And away went the bootblack and the long-gear'd Vermonter, through the crowd, the voice of the former ringing out in his favorite cry—

"Black yer boots, make 'm shine,
Costs ye only half a dime—"

"Who is that fellow?" asked a bystander, as the twain strode away—"he with the glib tongue, and the blacking-box?"

"Oh! that's Boss Bob," the clerical man said, with a peculiar smile—"a bootblack by profession, and, unconsciously, perhaps, one of the most expert detectives we have. There isn't scarcely a place or a policeman, in the city, whom he does not know, or that does not know him, and the same with the heft of our rascals. He is, though but a mere youth, an acute reader of human nature and faces, and by a seeming natural gift, a 'spotter' of no mean order."

"Then why does not some one give him a lift, to a better position?" was the inquiry.

"Let him alone; he will raise himself to a position of prominence, and be all the better for it. He is now the right party in the right place, for his profession admits him to places where detectives are most needed—the streets and drinking saloons. The 'city fathers' are not unmindful of his existence, or of its value, and the great secret of his worth is that he has no fear or reverence for mortals here below."

In the meantime Bob and his new friend proceeded down through Elm avenue toward the eastern terminus of the grounds, where the crowd was nearly as dense as at the main entrance. Indeed, for that matter, it was crowded, everywhere. The mass of saloons, side-shows, vendors of wares, and nuts; the cry of the pestered street-car drivers, and the shrill treble shriek of their whistles; the music from free-and-easies or hand-organs; the pell-mell rush of eager visitors—all these were sights or sounds peculiar to Elm avenue, at early forenoon.

"My gosh! what swads an' swads o' folks!" ejaculated Joshua Evergreen, as he and Boss Bob elbowed their way along. "Who'd ever thort the country'd take sech a puke, jest fer one show? I wish dad an' mam could see all

these folks. We used ter think ther country fair was some pumpkins, up at Plunkit, but I'll be gum-blasted if this ain't bigger nor two or three fairs."

"Oh! you bet," Bob assured, with a quizzical smile radiating his dirty countenance. "But, this hain't no shakes ter what ther next one's goin' ter be. Ther hull site o' Philadelphia ar' goin' ter be used fer ther grounds, an' all ther houses roofed over, an' turned inter one building—that is if I am nominated president o' the concern. 'Spect Philadelphia is purty near as big as Plunkit, eh?"

"Well, I guess not—leastwise thar's only a postoffis an' tavern. Hellow! what's the rip, now?"

They had reached the eastern end of the fence fronting upon Elm Avenue.

Boss Bob had seized the arm of his companion, and pointed a few feet distant, to a foppishly dressed swell who stood apart from the crowd that streamed by.

His face was a peculiar one, being somewhat feminine in feature, the complexion rather sallow, mouth large, nose thin and peaked, and eyes shaded by a pair of green goggles.

His attire was rich and stylish;—a summer suit of white duck, and a silk hat upon his head, in addition to a liberal display of jewelry, made his appearance quite natty.

"There! that's Chawles Augustus Rothschild Fitz Noodle, from Bosting!" announced Bob. "Does he look like the feller who skipped the tra-la-la-loo wi' yer X?"

"By gum! that's the same mean skunk, sure's preachin'!" Joshua declared, excitedly. "Jest let go my arm, an' see me go up and boot him, once. I'll wake up his fjes, a little."

"No! no! that won't do," Bob interposed. "You dassent boot a chap, here, like you do up in Plunkit, ef ye don't want a night in ther station 'us. There's a policeman, who will help you out."

And as he spoke Bob motioned to number 836, of the City Police, who approached, quickly.

"Well?" he said, interrogatively—"what now? Another greenhorn robbed, or lost?"

"Yes—this chap's out an X, through a 'confider,' and so we've tracked and spotted him, and now ef you'll jest jerk him, we're all right."

"Very well. If the losee is sure of his man, point him out, and I'll lift him!" the officer said.

"Thar's the mean skunk," Joshua declared, pointing out the swell. "He's the very skunk that promised to get my bill changed, but didn't come back, gol darn his picer!"

"And he calls himself Fitz Noodle!" Boss Bob added. "He's one o' the hossiest confiders in the city."

"I have suspected his lay, for several days, but haven't found him in the act. But, I'll take him now, nowever," the officer said.

And, walking softly up to the top, number 836 clapped his broad hand upon the shoulder of that individual, with the grim announcement:

"Young man, you must come along with me. You are my prisoner. No objections, now, or I'll put the nippers on ye!"

"The 'confider' wheeled around with a sharp oath, but instantly changed his demeanor to that of a cringing, frightened coward.

"Heavens! what do you say, my deah man—arrest me?" he gasped. "Why, my deah sir, you have made a mistake—a frightful mistake, I assure you! Weally, I am not the party you have taken me for. I am from Bosting, my deah man—right from the hub, which you might infer by my culchaw."

"Yor a darned liar!" Joshua declared, approaching, with doubled fists. "You're the gosh hanged skunk who tuk my ten dollars, an' run off wi' it, don't care ef you cum from Bosting or Belzebub."

"Yes, we twig yer nibs," Boss Bob added, with a grin. "You've got yer fingerhead inter a deefikilty, Mr. Fitz Noodle. Yer culchaw don't do ye no good, now. Off ter ther jug you go, onless ye fork over Evergreen-horn's X."

"Spare me! spare me!" Fitz Noodle protested, in accents wild. "Weally this is a frightful—ahorrible mistake!"

"Come along with you," number 836 replied, gruffly. "Ye can prove yer case, when he get before his Honor."

"Stop!" a voice cried. "Dis insult mast go no further. Dat manish isn't a 'confider,' an' I vouch for dat!"

CHAPTER V.

COOL RUTHERFORD AND ALBERTS—THE PAWN-BROKER AND BILL HEART-EATER.

THE party who had interfered came forward now, and not only Boss Bob, but the officer

recognized him as Dr. Albert Alberts, the pawnbroker and wealthy money-lender.

He was dressed in the height of fashion, and walked with a cane, the gold head of which glittered with settings of costly diamonds.

"Dot vas an innocent man, an' you must not arrest him," he repeated, in reply to the officer's stare. "I am Dr. Albert Alberts—I haff monish—I go bail for do shendlemans."

"Well, sir, the place to arrange that is before the judge of the police court," No. 836 replied, sternly. "You'll find your friend there, to-morrow morning, for a hearing. Come along, prisoner."

And August Fitz Noodle was forced to obey, as he was no match for the burly officer in point of size or strength.

Alberts made no attempt to follow; on the contrary, he turned angrily upon Boss Bob and Evergreen, who stood by.

"You cause der arrest of dot shendlemans?" he demanded, savagely, of the young boot-black.

"Yaw! yaw! I arresed him mitout a varrant, yust for sdealin' ten dollar from dis mon!" Bob mimicked, grimly.

"Den petter you look out," Alberts declared, in a rage. "I haff young vagabond like you taken up an' sent mit der House off Correction."

"Oh! ye do, do ye, darn yer picer," put in Joshua, doubling up his fists, in high dudgeon.

"Well, now, see heer, my Hebrew friend, if yeou don't want me ter git up an' boot ye, ye hadn't better sot a paw on this boy. My name's Joshua Evergreen, frum Plunkit, Varmont, an' I reckon I'm good's I luk, ev'ry day in a week, an' twice on Sunday. I've got a pair o' muscled hyar on my arms as big as a couple goose eggs, an' ef ye go ter stickin' yer nose inter my bizness, I calculate I ain't afeard ter knock ther spots clean off'm you, an' a dozen more jest like ye. Now, what do yeow say?"

"Oh! so you vas one ugly cusdomer, eh?" Alberts observed, an angry flame in his fiery eyes. "Vell, vell, you lets me alone, an' dot prisoner and I giff you ten dollar, all de vile."

"Oh! no ye won't, Captin'!" Boss Bob interposed. "Ye can't buy us out cheap, nary a time. If that 'confider's' one o' yer buzzom pals, ye'd better drap his acquaintance afore you get jugged yerself. Ye remember thet night up at Arthur Chambers's?"

The German-Jew scowled darkly, and his teeth went gratefully together.

"I pay you for dat, sometime," he growled, turning away. "I don't vas fo'get you, all de vile."

"Hah! hah!" Bob said, turning to Josh. "Ther way ter get shut uv a reptile is ter sling an old slug at him, I tell ye. Wonder what Fitz Noodle is to him, anyhow? 'Spect they're goin' inter partnership in sum sort o' deviltry. Now, cum along, Josh, an' we'll skip down ter ther station 'us, an' ye can enter a complaint ag'in the confider."

"But whar's my ten dollars?" Joshua demanded, anxiously.

"Oh! his nibs has got it, now, an' his 'honer' will finger it next. You'll never get fat on that X ag'in, you bet! Tell ye what, ther great city ain't no place like et is in ther country ter turn greenhorns loose. Take a feller o' my statter an' good lugs, who has a card o' interduccion ter all ther big guns, and whom experience hes taught ter twig ther son-of-a-guns, an' he can git along very well. But let a greeney cum ter town, an' nothin' but ill-luck an' misfortune greets him. Hain't ye got no collateral beside thet ten dollars, w'ich ye ain't got? No bonds or mortgages?"

"Not a darned cent, I swow, 'cept my return ticket, ter Plunkit!"

"Well, don't worry yerself inter a premature tomb. I've got a little capital laying around loose, an' I won't let ye starve."

"Ef I could only find whar uncle Mort lives, I'd be all hunk," Joshua declared hopefully.

"Ye see, uncle Mort he's rich, and puts on lots o' style, an' I know he'd be glad tew see me, seein's I jest cum down from Plunkit on purpose tew see 'em an' fetched a roll o' butter along in my sachel fer 'em."

"Now don't put no great dependence on yer city relates," Boss Bob said, nodding his head, sagely. "Ef I'm any jedge o' wharf-rats, they're a mighty oncertin set, especially ef you're in from ther country, an' hain't got lots o' style an' collateral. Know'd sev'ral instances whar ther country cousins didn't find ther folks ter home."

"Yew don't say!" Joshua replied, anxiously. "Well, now, I'll be gum-blasted ef they can git rid o' me, so easy. Mebbe I am sorry green, like, but I ain't no gol-darned fool, ef I did

come from the country. No sir-ee! I'm jes goin' ter hunt up uncle Mort's folks, an' pa'em a visit."

Feeling it his duty to assist the country stranger as much as he could, conveniently, Bob conducted him to the station-house at 39th street and Lancaster avenue, where a complaint was entered against Fitz Noodle, to be transferred to the Central Police court on the following morning, when the hearing was to take place.

Then Bob loaned his country acquaintance a dollar, and left him to pursue his search for his city relations.

Having reaped his principal harvest for the day, the young boot-black then trudged on down into the old city, to finish out the afternoon.

Albert Alberts sat in his office, that sam, afternoon, engaged in smoking a cigar, and reading a German paper, when the door opened to admit a tall, distinguished-looking personage, of rich attire, and a genial countenance, prominent features of which were a pair of handsome brown eyes, a classical nose, finely shaped mouth, and a golden-hued mustache that was heavy, and the ends curled. His form, too, was noticeably well proportioned.

He might have been five and thirty years of age, but looked considerably younger.

"Good-morning," was his brisk business-like salutation. "Do I behold Albert Alberts, M. D.?"

"Yaw! dot vas me," the Jew replied, eying his visitor, sharply. "I am Albert Alberts."

"Then you are the individual I seek, I presume," the stranger replied, seating himself, without invitation. "My name is Rutherford—an English lawyer, and counselor, by profession. I have a card of introduction to you from Schauss and Co., bankers."

"Yaw! I see," Alberts replied, regarding the card, with an approving nod. "You come o see me on business."

"Exactly. They stated that you were widely acquainted here in Philadelphia, and would be able to assist me, they thought."

"Dot ish right. If I can help you, I do so mit pleasure," the pawnbroker replied. "Tell me vat you want of me."

"Well, you see, I am prosecuting the search for heirs to a great English estate, which has lain in disuse, until it is on the eve of being outlawed, and confiscated by the Queen. There are several heirs thought to be living in America, and I am in search of them."

"Ah! if you haff no more definite clew ash dot, you no find 'em."

"Perhaps not. But the case is like this: Years ago there vas an old British aristocrat, named Lord Derby Rutherford—a very miser, they say; at least, he amassed a monstrous fortune, in lands and moneys. But, being an old bachelor, on his death his wealth must all go to the commonwealth, to be handled by the Government, as he had no lawful heirs. This being against his notion, he set about to dispose of his property by will. A will was made as follows: To an old tenant's youngest child, whose name was Sutherland, he bequeathed one quarter of his total wealth, the will to be kept a secret until the old man's death; if the heir to the first quarter was blessed with children, the estate was to be entailed to the youngest child, and so on through each successive generation; but, understand you, this was only to be a gift in name, as none of the heirs were to touch a penny's worth of the property until one hundred years after the date of the will, when the then youngest existing heir of the first legatee of the first quarter was to receive the quarter due him, minus interest, which was to be left out. The said interest was to go to the attorney who had charge of the settlement of the estates, which were all to be converted into money, one year previous to the expiration of the hundred years, said money to be held in possession of the attorney, or his heir-deputy, until the heirs to the fortune should be found.

"The second quarter was bequeathed to an old poacher's son, by the name of Mortimer; the third to a gardener's son, named Ellston, and the fourth to a hunter's son, named Preston, all under the same provisions and stipulations as regards the first quarter."

"Dot vas a strange vill," Alberts said, a glimmer in his eyes. "You haff the monish for all de heirs?"

"Yes, aboard my private steam yacht, in which I crossed the Atlantic. I am the grandson of the son of old Jervis Rutherford, to whom Lord Derby Rutherford confided his legal affairs in 1776, and the settlement of his estates."

"Der name is der same. You vas a relative, perhaps?"

"No; the two Rutherfords bore no traceable relationship to each other."

"How much does the whole fortune amount to?" Alberts asked, his eyes glittering greedily, and a perceptible nervousness in his voice.

"I do not know, hardly, for it is a fabulous sum. A year ago, when my father died, he closed up the affairs, and placed each heir's portion in an iron strong-box, respectively, directing me to take charge of them, and find the heirs. That is my errand, principally, here in America."

"Vell, how furder you haff traced dese heirs?" Alberts interjected.

"Down to the present generation. The Ellstons are all dead, and there are no heirs to their portion. The Sutherlands are somewhere in America, as are the Prestons and the Mortimers; but where, I am unable to say."

"An' vat, den, you expect of me?"

"I want you to keep an eye out for any so-named parties, as you may be able to strike them quicker than I. I will call again, some other time, and see what success you have. If you discover any of the rightful heirs I will pay you liberally."

"All right. Yust giff me some of der names and I will be watchful—on account off your introduction by Schauss & Company."

"Very well. The first quarter was bequeathed to Duke Sutherland. He died and left a son, who may be living yet; if so, aged about seventy years."

The second quarter was left to Ethelbert Mortimer; he died leaving a son named Walcross. He I believe to be dead, leaving a son; name unknown. The third quarter was left to Arnold Ellston; all heirs supposed to be dead. The fourth and last quarter of the fortune, was left to Sefton Preston, who died, leaving a son, named Ralph Preston, who died young, leaving a son by name Morton Preston, yet supposed to be living."

"All right. I haff take 'em down. Goot-tay, Mister Rutherford."

"Good-day. I will call again, within the month."

And rising, Colonel Rutherford took his departure.

After he had gone, Albert Alberts rubbed his hands together, an exultant smile flitting across his sinister countenance.

"Yawl! yawl! Mister Rutherford, you come to me, and I help you, maybe, but I also help myself. You was a rich goose, and I pluck your fadders, all de wile. You make me your agent; I will see apoud dose. Dis vas von valuable case, and I giff it my attention. I haff got some poyas vat help me. I haff you shadowed. I play a loue hand, and I vin de game, maybe!"

Night dropped its somber mantle once more over the City of Homes, but the streets knew no rest.

Tramp, tramp, tramp went the thousands of pedestrians through its streets—some still sight-seeing, despite the fatigues of a day at the exposition; others seeking their lodgings—business men, loafers, visitors, policeman, all mixed up in a jangling mass.

At the corner of Ninth and Chestnut streets, Albert Alberts stood in a shadow cast by an awning—stood there and watched with eager gaze the crowd, as it passed by.

What is his business, we do not pretend to know, but judging by the expectant expression upon his countenance he is watching for some one.

"He always passes along this side of the street at about this hour," the pawnbroker mutters, with manifest impatience. "I would not miss him, to-night, for fifty dollars."

In clear unbroken English the Jew now speaks, instead of his broken accent, which evidences the fact that he is not unable to speak correctly. A habit, probably—his broken speech. The minutes wing by, laden with the peculiarly exciting scene; still the shadow upon the pawnbroker's face tells that he has not yet seen his man.

"Strange!" he mutters again. "I hope they've not nabbed him, on old scores. Ah!"

He stepped suddenly into the thickest of the crowd, and tapped a man upon the shoulder—then retreated to his first position.

The man followed him—a burly, roughly-dressed chap, with a countenance that an excess of liquor had made red and repulsively sinister, what with the coarse heavy black mustache, and the fiery bloodshot eyes. A typical pirate or brigand was he, in appearance, from head to foot.

"Well!" he growled, gruffly, eying the pawnbroker, none too lovingly.

"What d'ye want of Bill Heart-Eater?"

"Much," Alberts replied, blandly. "You ish der very man's vot I want to see. I haff pen looking for you ash much ash von hour. Come down here."

He led the way down a pair of stairs that descended from the street into a dive that was then known as Noonan's Varieties.

The first apartment entered was a bar-room, with chairs and tables strewn about.

At one of these tables, in a retired corner, Alberts seated himself, and motioned the other to follow his example, which he did.

"Now den," the pawnbroker said, lighting a cigar, "we will proceed to pizness."

CHAPTER VI.

AN INFAMOUS SCHEME—EUNICE.

THERE was a special emphasis upon the Jew's word, "pizness," meant to carry weight to the auditor.

"Well, go ahead," the other replied. "I am Bill Heart-Eater, an ex-pirate from the high seas, an' I'm generally to be commanded fer a fair stipend. But, if ye're goin' ter talk w' me, jest shake off them 'ash' and 'ishes,' an' cum down to old United States dialect."

The pawnbroker smiled.

"You no like der goot old speech of der faderland, den?" he said.

"I allow not," Heart-Eater replied.

"Then I will speak plain English. The other is somewhat of a habit, and then, you know, comes natural. I have been anxiously waiting to know about the Sea Breeze?"

"It left Liverpool yesterday."

"The devil you say!"

"No—the ship Sea Breeze, laden with goods for Morton Prescott, Philadelphia. It could not be detained longer, although I spent every thousand you gave me ter hinder it. Prescott kept ther cable hot w' telegrams, and they finally had to pull out."

"Prescott is worried, then?" the Jew asked, eagerly.

"Somewhat, I reckon, for ef ther Sea Breeze ain't in soon, it'll be hot fer him, and don't you fergit it."

"Yes, it will be interesting," Alberts replied.

"How long before the Sea Breeze will be due?"

"Let her make her fastest time and she cannot shove her nose into Pier 26, Delaware, before September 10th, at one o'clock!"

The pawnbroker rubbed his hands gleefully.

"Dot ish goot!" he muttered. "Dot ish goot. He no raise der monish—den. I take th' girl. But, how 'poud it—if der ship should get in before dot time?"

"He is saved. A gang of retail dealers stand ready to take ther cargo off of his hands, for ready cash."

The Jew uttered an oath.

"Den dot ship must not touch port previous to the eleventh of September," he said, fiercely.

"You hear vot I say, Pill Heart-Eater?"

"I reckon I ain't deaf," the ex-pirate replied, with a chuckle. "I shall hev to choke off yer wind, though, ef ye don't cheese thet old clo' brogue."

"Den I stop," Alberts returned. "The ship Sea Breeze must be delayed in some way, so as not to reach the harbor."

"You want me to stop her?" asked the ex-pirate.

"Yes! yes! You are the very man for the job. Will you do it?"

"Yes, for a thousand dollars, spot cash!"

"You are a fool. I not give you that."

"Odds is the difference ter me. For a straight thousand I will scuttle the Sea Breeze in Delaware bay. Even if she don't sink, it'll delay her. No thousand—no scuttle!"

"Then, maybe I send you to Moya for past offenses," the pawnbroker suggested, with a sneering coolness that caused Heart-Eater to darken.

"You'd better not try it," he growled. "If you want fight, you'll git licked. I hold as many points ag'in' you as you do ag'in' me, if not a few more. How high do you value the girl?"

"At one million of dollars."

"Phew! I never see'd ther piece o' femininity I'd give one million cents fer."

"The girl's a beauty. She has education, social position, refinement, and admission to all the highest circles of metropolitan society. That I have not got; with her as my wife, I could have it. She would loosen my purse-strings, and make me so popular a man that the world would forget that I am a Jew."

"Bet yer sea-boots they wouldn't fergit it so

long's ye cling ter yer 'ish' and 'ash' and 'dot' and 'dose'," Heart-Eater confidently declared. "Or till ye git rid o' the smell o' garlicks and onions. An', ef ye want' yer purse-strings loosened, I'll do et, cheap as anybody."

"Yawl! yawl! I know; you lift 'em, for much!" Alberts replied, with a chuckle. "Put I am no hog, if I am a Jew. We will take some visky, to gargle our throat; den I propose some dings to you."

"No visky for me—nothin' lees'n chammy," the ex-pirate growled. "I've made a half-gallon of old benzeen sick, to-day, an' now I'll change off, jest fer ther fun uv it."

Without demur, the pawnbroker ordered and paid for a half-dozen of champagne, in pint bottles.

They were soon served, by a waiter, and the two men—the conspirator and his tool—each finished one, before they conversed further.

"Now, then, I'm ready to receive money proposals," Heart-Eater said, smacking his flabby lips. "Ef ye've got any paying cash jobs, jest toes 'em at me, right peart."

"Vell, I tell you vot I do," Alberts said, after a moment of meditation. "You vonce dell me, Pill, vot you haff a fortune comin' to you, ole in England."

"Yes, but it'll allus be comin' I reckon, fer I hev lost all clew ter it, long ago," the ex-pirate replied.

"Put maybe I helps you to get dot fortune Pill?" Alberts suggested, cunningly. "You say vot your father's name vas Ellston?"

"Yes, thet was his name."

"An' you pe Ellston's only heir?"

"Humph! I was ther old man's son, but not much uv a heir. All ther old cuss had when he flopped his last trump, was sum ragged togs, and an empty tobacco-box."

"Vell, den, Pill, how much you giff to know how to git dish fortune?"

"I'll give you six inches o' steel, if ye don't drop that gabble, the ex-pirate growled gruffly.

"Den, I stop!" Alberts said. "This fortune of yours, Bill, is awaiting a claimant. The hundred years is now up, and you can have it, freely, if you only know how and where to get it."

"Cuss you. How do you know anything about it, you infernal Jew?"

"Oh! I find out."

"An' ye can tell me how an' where ter lay my claws on it?"

"If you do shust as I want."

"Look out fer my knife, you infer—"

"Oh! I forgot again," Alberts apologized.

"If you do just as I want, Bill Heart-Eater, I git that fortune, and place half of it in your possession."

"What in the devil will you do with the other half, then?" Heart-Eater demanded grimly.

"Oh! I keep for you de odder half—the other half I would say—till you get old. Maybe you need it, then."

"Oh! you're an accommodatin' cuss, you are. And if I don't agree to that?"

"You get none?"

"Cuss ye! Well, I suppose you've got it all yer own way, and I'd better take half, then none. Shove out yer proposals."

"Very well. I want you, first of all, to hunt up a fellow whose name is Rutherford. He's tall, blonde, handsome. Then, I want you to find out whereabouts his private steam-yacht lies, about the harbor, and report to me. He is a 'fat goose,' and if you can 'sample' him, perhaps you can make a raise, and share it with me. Mind you don't harm him, though."

"Black yer boots, make 'm shine. Only costs you half a dime. Touch yer sins up like a feather. Reflect yer natur' in yer leather."

With a sudden curse Alberts wheeled around to find Boss Bob just passing, boot-blackening out of fit in hand.

"Satan take the boy!" he growled, turning to Heart-Eater. "He's always around. Do you suppose he overheard us?"

"What 'f he did?" the ex-pirate demanded, dashing the neck off his second bottle of champagne. "He's only a young urchin."

"But as keen as a razor, as sharp-eyed as a lynx, and as quick to hear as a deer."

"Never mind him—go on with your propositions."

"Well, next, I want you to see that the Sea Breeze does not touch this port before September 10th. After that, I may have another job or two for you to do."

"But when am I ter git the cash?"

"When I am done with you."

"That may be never."

"You err. When I get the young and accomplished Miss Prescott, I half—have—nothing to do with such men as Bill Heart-Eater."

"See here! D'ye mean ter cast a slur on ther pirates o' ther high seas?"

"No! no slur at all."

"Ye'd better draw in yer bow-line. I've made better men than you walk ther plank, I tell ye. Is this all?"

"At present, yes. I will leave you to enjoy the rest of the champagne. When necessary to my interests, you may find me at my office, and report."

Then rising, the scheming Jew left the dive.

Not so with Heart-Eater.

To have left without finishing the remaining bottles of champagne, would have been in his estimation a great sin. Moreover, he had a great capacity for stimulating drink, which he took every opportunity available to test.

The contents of the third, fourth and fifth bottles found passage down his throat, and at last, when he had finished, his head dropped forward upon the table. He was overcome—drunk!

Not far away Boss Bob and his strange companion, the Nondescript, stood secretly watching him, while they smoked a cigar.

"Thare! that settles his hash!" the King of Bootblacks said, as the ex-pirate went off into a loss. "Now, you stay heer, Nondescript, or hereabouts, an' when he trots home, you trot after him, an' memorize his palatial abode. It may be useful fer us ter know heerafter. D'ye understand?"

The other youth nodded; then Bob turned away, and as he once more emerged upon the street, his peculiar cry was heard, familiar, to this day, no doubt, to many a Centennial visitor—

"Black yer boots—make 'm shine,
Only cost ye half a dime—"

Albert Alberts was at home, later, that same evening.

No common home, either, was the abode of the wily pawnbroker.

It was one of the princely residences to be found upon Green street, Philadelphia—a stone and brick structure of castellated appearance, the magnificent exterior of which was but a foretaste of the interior. Everywhere was the evidence of wealth—luxurious and costly furniture, grand pictures, rich carpets, artistic hangings and fresco work—everything in the shape of art or ornament that a heart could desire, or a fancy crave, was there, showing that, villain though he was, the pawnbroker prince had a rare and well exercised taste, which his abundant means could well afford to gratify.

In a private parlor, sacred to his tread, the pawnbroker sat, in an easy-chair, while his slipped feet rested upon an ottoman, and a marble wine-table at his right hand contained many choice brands of liquors, in decanters, cigars, glasses, and pipes and tobaccos, all of the choicest kinds.

His head was bowed forward, resting upon his hand, and it was evident that he was buried in deepest thought. That his senses were keenly on the alert, however, was manifest by the quick raising of his head, as a footfall was faintly audible upon the soft carpet.

"Eunice!" he articulated, sternly.

"Yes, Eunice!" came the reply from a finely-shaped and handsome young woman who stood before him, clad in the costume of the streets. "I wonder that you are able to pronounce my name, without pausing to recall it, Albert!"

"Ah!" The pawnbroker's manner changed from sternness to bland demeanor. "Why say you so, my dear Eunice?"

"Because you have so long neglected to call upon me, that I thought you had quite forgotten that such a person existed as me. Do not 'my dear,' to me, Dr. Alberts; I will not tolerate it."

"And why not, pray? Are you not mine—betrothed from the cradle, by an agreement between our respective parents?"

"Exactly! Do you remember what is the forfeit, if either you or I should back out of the contract?"

"Ah! no; I really have forgotten about that. {—I—ahem!}"

"I have not forgotten, Dr. Alberts," the maiden replied, growing momentarily more excited. "No, indeed, I have not forgotten. The wronged never forget. My blood is just as pure and high as yours. I am of Hebrew descent—you are the same. By that fact we should be bound together by a strong tie. The forfeit, sir, of which I spoke, is ten thousand

dollars, to be paid by the one who backs out, to the other!"

"So much? Well, what of it? I do not think that I have given verbal dissent to our union."

"You have not? What am I to infer, when I receive no more visits from you? You have not darkened my door since about the time of the opening of the Centennial. What is the reason?"

"Ah! you are sensible, now, to ask that," Alberts replied, good-naturedly. "Business! business, my dear—a great amount of business alone could keep me so long from your side. Day and night I have labored, until to-night, I am forced to seek my home, from sheer fatigue."

"You lie, Albert Alberts—you lie like the base villain that you are! Think you I do not know the reason why you have not come? If so, you err, most strangely. I know the one and only reason. How? Bah! I am no fool—leave it to me to find out. You expect to foreclose a mortgage soon upon the person of a pretty Christian girl; you sit here at your ease, nights, dreaming over the victory you expect to achieve. Do you ever think of Eunice Rassauer? No, indeed, no! She, in such moments, has entirely dropped out of your thoughts. But, beware, Albert Alberts! You should know me well enough to know that I would never let you have her—no! no! no! a thousand times, no!"

"Eunice! Eunice!" the pawnbroker exclaimed, anxiously; "calm yourself, my dear girl. You are wild—excited—"

"Stop! do not interrupt me. Hear me out, and then I will go. I am not wild; I know just what I am saying. I have been gathering wrath, for over a month, and making it ready to convert into vengeance. All I require is a moment's notice to pour that vengeance upon you. I have said you should not have the Christian girl—more, I have sworn it! Death shall be my agency of prevention. She shall not die, she is not to blame. It is you who shall die, unless you let her free. Remember—such is the oath of Eunice Rassauer!"

Then, turning, with a face flushed with indignation, the Hebrew girl swept from the room.

When she had gone, Alberts poured out a glass of Rhine wine, and swallowed it at a gulp.

"Ve shall see!" he said, grimly, returning to his dialect; "ve shall see apoud dis bizness! It dakes two ter settle such questions as dose."

CHAPTER VII.

BOSS BOB TO THE FRONT AGAIN.

"PAPA!"

Pearl Prescott stopped her father in the grand hallway, as he was about to quit the mansion, on the evening of the second day of September—stopped him by barricading his passage with her slight figure.

"Well, my dear?" the merchant kindly interrogated, as he stroked her soft, luxuriant hair.

"Papa, come in here, if you can spare me a moment;" and she threw open the library door, and entered, the merchant following. "Now Tell me," Pearl said, a wild, anxious look in her eyes—"tell me if the Sea Breeze has yet arrived? I cannot longer wait without knowing. For the last month I have been growing anxious, by noting how troubled you look at times, but until now have refrained from asking you."

"No, the Sea Breeze has not arrived," Morton Prescott replied, gravely.

A faint moan came from Pearl.

"It is as I have all along anticipated," she said, attempting to be very brave, when in truth her heart was sinking. "The ship will not touch the port in time, and I—I am lost!"

"By Heaven, no!" the merchant replied, pacing the floor excitedly. "Something will yet turn up, I hope, to rid you from the claim of the scheming Jew!"

"Ah! if the Sea Breeze does not come home, how will—how can anything turn up? Can you get the money to pay back the loan?"

"I fear not, unless the ship arrives. As soon as she touches her prow in port, I can board her, and dispose of the whole cargo within ten minutes, at reasonable figures. But unless she arrives previously to one minute to twelve, it will be impossible for me to raise a dollar, except by mortgaging this place again, and that would not satisfy the demand."

At this juncture a servant entered.

"A bootblack, sir, at the door, who wants to see Mr. Morton Prescott, sir," the worthy said, bowing. "Shall I bounce 'im?"

"No, Lawlor; show him in," the merchant replied, after a moment of thoughtfulness. Then, after the waiter had gone, he turned and answered Pearl's surprised gaze.

"My views have changed somewhat, you see,"

he said, with a faint smile. "I am in a prospect of coming down to the level of bootblacks, and may as well acquaint myself with their ways."

"The ragamuffin, sir," announced the voice of Lawlor, and the next minute a person was shoved forward into the room, and the door shut after it.

The person was Boss Bob, dirty and ragged as ever, and equipped with his even dirtier-looking blacking kit; which he forthwith deposited upon the sofa, while he dropped confidentially into an easy-chair.

And the merchant and his pretty daughter, standing a short distance away, gazed at the street gamin in undisguised astonishment.

"Evenin' to ye!" Boss Bob said, not apparently in the least discomposed at the situation.

"Rather cheeky, ain't I, ter take persession in this shape? But then, ye see, it's pardonable, 'ca'se I've been head over neck inter bizness ever since daylight. 'Spect you're Morton Prescott, Eskwire, ain't ye; an' that purty young lady is yer darter?"

"I am Morton Prescott—yes, sir; and the young lady is also my daughter," the merchant replied, curtly.

"Tho't so, I did! You two look as near alike as two peas. Tho't I'd meander down this way, and call in, jest fer fun—ter see if ye didn't want ter engage a purfessional detective. 'Ain't purtlicker about ther good repertation I make—you kin have that gratis. All I'm after's ther collateral!"

"Do you pretend to call yourself a professional detective, then?" the merchant demanded, with a smile.

"Yes, I reckon I'll adopt ther thing, since I've hed ther luck to git a recommend from Stokely. Didn't use ter aspire ter a posish above blackin' boots, but, since I've see'd Grant, an' all ther other big guns paradin' theirselves around heer at ther Centenyal, I've jest made up my mind ter rise, too. Hain't goin' ter shake off wi' ther boots tho', til I strike a permanent job. 'Twon't be long afore I'll be as big, an' fat, an' corpulent, an' high-toned as all these fust-class roosters, fer I'm goin' ter cum down ter eyster an' clam-bake diet. So, ef ye think ye hain't got no openin', jest tip us yer tongue, ter thet effect, an' I'll meander off."

Morton Prescott laughed, lightly, and even Pearl's eyes flashed with amusement, for both saw that their visitor, although a street Arab, was more than his terse, illiterate manner of speech would seem to indicate.

"Well, I don't know that I have much need for the services of a detective," the merchant replied. "What caused you to think I might need one?"

"Oh! it kinder popped inter my noddle. Ye see, when a feller gets onto the verge of a precipice, an' can't see no way out 'cept by ther sacrifice o' a life, he needs a friend an' a leetle help purty bad."

"A very truthful bit of logic, my young friend. But, have you any idea you could furnish the requisite relief?"

"Dunno about that; might, an' ag'in I might not. Wouldn't be much afraid ter tackle ther case, ef I hed all o' ther p'int's jotted down."

"What is your name, sir?"

"Boss Bob, fer short. There's another name o' Maloney hitched onto me, but I don't take to it kindly. 'Mongst ther b'boys, I'm generally called ther King o' Bootblacks, because I gin-nerally 'corner' ther market, an' monopolize ther traffick o' sech guns as Stokely, Hartranft, Dom Pedro, 'Lysses Grant, an' in fact all ther chief magnates an' 'way ups."

"Boss Bob, eh? I think your name is not unfamiliar to me. I have heard the Chief of Police speak of you."

"Yas; they all know me as well as they do ther 'clubs' when ther hand is flush."

"Well, sir, since you seemed to have gained some insight into my affairs, suppose you tell me just what you do know?" the merchant said.

Boss Bob scratched his 'peeled' head a moment, as if trying to determine what was best to do; a finely shaped head, it was, too, large and well developed.

"Well, ter come down to solid facts," he said, after a moment, "I heerd down on 'Change, thet yer financial condishun wazzent prime. Thet was along sum spell ago. Next, I found out, I was secreted in Alberts's pawnbroker shop, last New Year's, a-watchin' fer deposits o' stolen goods, when you cum in, an' bargined off yer gal ter thet Jewsharp. Thet made me mad, it did, fer I know'd w'at a rusty customer thet Alberts war, an' sez I ter myself, sez I: I'll keep my eye peeled till this peach ripens,

an' mebbe I kin git a bite. So I've kinder spotted ther Jew ever since, an' caught him in several other gum games."

"Ah! you are more valuable than I at first deemed you, boy," the merchant said, eagerly. "What else do you know relative to this business?"

"I know that unless you are 'flush' wi' collateral about one minute to twelve o'clock, eight days after to-day, yonder gal is a goner, sure's preechin'."

"Alas! I am in no danger of getting money enough to repay the loan," the merchant groaned, and he began to pace and fidget. "What is to be done?"

"Well, thet 'depends,' as the old woman said, when she pointed to her husband, who was performing on a perpendicular tight rope, down at Moyamensing. Ef ye want ter make an engagement o' my professional services, I'll endeavor ter give ye a lift."

"Of course—of course! If you can and will assist me out of my dilemma, I will be your humble servant, forever."

"Nixy! thet ain't what I'm after," Boss Bob averred, shaking his head. "I kin get lots o' jobs, if I'd take my pay in friendship an' all sech lollygag. Tell ye what it is, boss: I've stubbed my way through ther world since I was big enough ter pick up cigar stubs an' sell 'em, an' I never found a better an' trustier friend than solid collateral. You folks who was brought up in luxury an' illegance may hev a warm admiration fer so-called 'friendship,' but, ef ye hedn't but a shilling or two, blame me if you wouldn't find yer so-called friends scarcer than teeth in ther back o' a saw. Solid cash an' plenty o' cheek 'll carry a feller thru the world in better shape than a huckster cart-load o' hot-house friends. Ain't them Centennial facks, now?"

"Well, I must admit that there is considerable logic in your argument. Of course you shall be well paid for your work for me if you can in any way assist me, and shall also have my friendship."

"And mine, too. If you will help papa to gainsay that odious Jew's claim upon me, I'll—I'll just worship you," Pearl cried, clasping her hands, enthusiastically.

At which Boss Bob gave vent to a little prolonged whistle of amazement.

"Well, now, that ain't bad, fer high," he admitted, surveying Miss Prescott. "You're the first young lady I ever met, who has complimented me—an' you're a reg'lar beauty, too. I most generally git broomsticks, bootjacks, an' scrub buckets fired at my head, when I go ter shinin' around ther gals. So, I'll jest jot ye down in my memory, an' ef I ever conclude ter hitch up in double-harness, I'll give you ther fust chance. Now, general, I guess you're all honest Injun, an' I'll give ye a lift. I s'pose ye know ther Jewsharp, Alberts, has bin workin' ag'in' you, all the while?"

"Indeed, no—I know nothing of the sort. Every time I have met him he has seemed very gentlemanly, and has manifested the greatest interest that I should get my ship in, in time to dispose of my cargo, so that I could pay him back the loan."

"Oh! he's bin soft-soapin' you, hos he? Well, I kinder tho't that was his game. But, ter come right down ter ther solid facts o' ther case, he's bin playin' off on ye, so thet ye shouldn't get yer ship in, time enuff ter sell yer cargo, an' raise ther rhino. He hez in his employ, a big ex-pirate, an' through this same daisy's aid, has caused the Sea Breeze from being started, from time to time. But, it is finally on its way here, and if nothing happens, will strike this port sometime between ther 9th and 11th of September."

"Ah! then there is yet hopes!" the merchant exclaimed.

"Mebbe and mebbe not," Boss Bob replied. "These ships and winds ain't much ter be depended on, ginnerally, when it comes ter a day or two. An' then, too, ther Jew hes got wind of about ther time she's due, an' he's goin' ter start this Heart-Eater off ter scuttle her!"

"What! Can this be true?"

"Yas; true's skippy cheese. An' ef we don't circumnavigate that precious pair o' knaves, ther Sea Breeze will be delayed, if not grounded on ther bottom o' Delaware bay."

"By Heaven! this is the most infamous thing I have yet heard of!" the merchant cried, greatly excited. "As you say, these consummate rascals must be balked. If what you say is true, this Jew is even a greater rascal than I deemed him."

"Oh! he's a boss, and no mistake. I thort I'd drop in, and wake up yer eyedeas on ther sub-

ject of his virtues, an' havin' done it I'll go, I reckon."

"But, you will come again, my boy," Morton Prescott said, warmly.

"Oh! you bet yer boots on that! I'll 'tend ter business, an' ef anything turns up, I'll report."

"Do so. I shall want to see you again, after I've had time to think this matter over. I must think the matter over, and then—"

"Mind yer P's and Q's an' ye'll wether ther gale. Yes, I'll cum again, fer I've sot an eye on yer purty daughter, an' fer her sake, I'm goin' ter go my last dollar on savin' yer venture. But, a penny earned is a penny more added to ther foundation o' a fortune, an' as yer boots look rusty, I'll add business ter pleasure, by shinin' 'em, free gratis."

And the next minute the irrepressible Arab of the streets was briskly busied at blacking the merchant's boots.

When the job was completed, he cheekily accepted a proffered fifty-cent piece, and doffing his hat to his new acquaintances, took his departure, giving vent, when he reached the street, to his peculiar cry:

"Black yer boots, make 'em shine," etc.

That same evening, a man stood upon the top of the beautifully gas-illuminated double-decked bridge, which crosses the Schuylkill river at Spring Garden street, and endeavored to decipher the writing upon a piece of paper, which he held in the light of one of the pillared gas-lamps.

"This must be the directions the boy gave me," he muttered, "and as I am in the locality, I must find him, for it strikes me he's the very chap I want. Somehow, it occurs to me that I made a fool of myself when I took that infernal Jew into my confidence, for I saw him regarding me, to-day, with a malignant expression upon his face, which sent a shudder down my backbone. Humph! I've been here well on toward a month, now, and am no nearer the conclusion of my job than I was on my arrival, despite my advertisements, and the search of the directories. The next thing for me to do is to employ a bootblack to assist. Ha! ha! my Colonel Dick Rutherford—what would your blue-blooded relations say, did they know that you were stooping to notice common bootblacks? Well! well! we are all flesh and blood, and I don't know why one isn't as good as another."

"Let me see! This is the queerest visiting card I ever struck: 'Boss Bob: Schuylkill river; Bines and Scheaff's Coal-us; Bin 12—Hard—Large Nut; Squeal 'Keno' in falsetto voice."

"Now if that isn't characteristic, I've lost my guess. Yet it's plain enough, no doubt, when one knows how to take it. His residence, evidently, is in Bines and Scheaff's coal-house, Coal Bin No. 12 of the Hard, Large Nut species. Now the next thing is to find the coal-house in question. I saw the name, somewhere along here, yesterday."

A few glances around found the coal-house in question, standing upon the west shore of the river, and identified from other buildings by the name of the firm upon it in large letters.

To reach it Colonel Rutherford would be obliged to reach the lower deck, which was accessible by crossing the river to the eastern side, and then descend the reservoir path into East Fairmount park, into which the lower deck or Haverford street section of the bridge had an opening. Then he would have to recross the river again to the western side.

Being a brisk walker, however, he soon completed the task, and stood in the vicinity of the great building, used for the purpose of unloading and storing the coal of river traffic.

When but a few rods from this building, he raised his voice and shouted "Keno," as directed upon the paper, but it sounded anything but falsetto in tone, to him.

Then, standing in the darkness, he waited for an answer.

CHAPTER VIII.

DOWN THE SCHUYLKILL—TOO LATE!

DIRECTLY there was a reply.

"Hello, there—what's wanted?" came from somewhere about the barn-like edifice.

Rutherford went forward. He recognized the voice as that belonging to Boss Bob.

"It's I—Colonel Rutherford," he said. "Where will I find you? These premises are new to me, and it's darker than the seven shades of Egypt."

A little whistle denoting surprise, came from out the darkness. Then footsteps, and later the form of the King of the Bootblacks followed.

"So it's you, is it?" he demanded, surveying the colonel, by aid of a small dark lantern, on which he turned the slide. "Wasn't lookin' fer extinguished visitors at this time o' night. Didn't know but some o' the roughs had cum ter dust my ulster, as they've frequently promised to do. Come along inter my private parlor."

And, following his initiation the strange youth led the way into the great storehouse, and up a pair of stairs to a second floor. Here were numerous bins of coal, upon the side fronting the river; black and dirt were the chief characteristics of the place, as the colonel had surmised.

One bin had been long in disuse, evidently, and this had been cleaned and washed until it was in more of a presentable condition. It's furniture consisted of a large oaken chest, bound with iron; two stools, and a pile of straw in one corner, covered with blankets.

Into this novel habitation, Boss Bob conducted his visitor, and pointed him to a stool, while he set his lantern upon the chest.

"Heer we aire," the King of the Bootblacks said, with a glance of pride at his surroundings. "This is my castle, every day in a week, when I ain't absent. How d'ye like it, Curnel?"

"You don't mean to tell me this is the only home you have?" the London barrister demanded.

"Yas, I opine it is," Bob replied, producing a couple of oranges, and offering one to his visitor, which was accepted with thanks. "I'll allow it ain't no brown-sto; e, ner a brick abode, but two 'bricks' occerpies it, nights, which is jest the same. As ter hev'in' any other home, I spect there's another domysile, down on St. Mary's street, wa't claims me, but I don't never respond, ye see. I cut loose from ther old folks over a year ago, 'ca'se I tuk it inter my head they warn't my parents. The old woman she is Dutch, the old man is Irish, an' I'm clear Yank, ter ther backbone, an' I couldn't make it appear thet they war my nateral born progenitors. An', then, visions rized inter my mind thet mebbe I was a lost heir ter sum Duke, or Vice-President, an' so I cut loose from ther old 'uns, an' left ther old ledly ter yell 'catty—catty—cat-fish,' in a falsetter voice, an' ther old man ter heave coke, jest as he used ter, in days of 'Yorick. "I wasn't never safe up there, no-how ye could make it, fer both of 'em used ter cum home 'bilin', an' sumtimes ther air'd be fuller o' chairs, long-neck bottles, an' brickbats, than a yaller dorg is o' fleas. So I cut loose."

Colonel Rutherford finished the orange, and lit a cigar, a smile upon his face.

"You did right," he said, after a moment.

"I don't believe myself, that you sprung from such parentage. But, that is neither here nor there. I have a little need of your services, and will pay you well, if you succeed."

"Well, I'm willin', as long's there's collateral an' no crime attached ter ther job. So jesting out yer wants in short meter, an' I'll listen."

Accordingly the colonel explained to him the errand which had brought him to America, in the same way that he had explained it to Alberts, the pawnbroker, adding the fact of his taking the Jew into his confidence.

"There's jest where ye made a fool of yourself," Boss Bob declared. "I wouldn't trust that Jewsharp wi' a cutting uv my little toenail, I wouldn't. He's a sly rooster, an' a deep schemer. Bet a five-cent cigar I twig thar game."

"Ah! how do you mean?"

"I'll tell ye. I've bin spottin' that same Israelite fer awhile back, an' ther other night I overheard a part o' his conversation wi' an ex-pirate, who sails under ther name of Bill Heart-Eater. Your name was mentioned, and so I listened. Alberts was a tellin' Heart-Eater about a big fortune to which ther latter was a joint heir; an' the Jew told Ellston, or Heart-Eater, thet if he'd help him do some jobs, he'd git him his share o' the fortune."

"Ah! what kind of a man is this Heart-Eater, then?"

"A reg'lar bony-fide ruffian, who'd as lieve knife a feller as to luk at him. He's bin a pirate, he sez."

"And claims that his name is Ellston, eh?"

"It seems so."

"Did you learn anything else?"

"No; not jest then. I know a few about thet ar' Alberts, all the same. He's playin' ther base violin wi' a double bow."

"How do you mean?"

"Oh! in multitudinously various ways, I reckon. He's tryin' one little transaxion w'ot I reckon won't work."

Then, in his own unique way, the young King of Bootblacks related the state of affairs that was menacing the Prescott family.

Colonel Rutherford listened attentively; the flash of his handsome eyes showing the interest he felt.

"You say this merchant's daughter is very pretty, eh?" he interrogated, when Bob had finished.

"Purty! Well, I guess so: She's purtier'n any ripe peach or Jarsey watermelon ye ever see. Blame me, ef I wasn't so ambishus ter reach ther presidential cheer, I'b'leev' I'd ask'er ter share my sorrows an' joys."

The English barrister laughed heartily. "I presume so. Prescott, you say the name is?"

"You bet!"

"Prescott—Prescott. Humph! I wonder if there is any significance in the resemblance between the two names. I say, boy, can you not take me around to this Prescott's, and give me a recommend?"

Boss Bob scratched his head a moment, reflectively.

"I dunno about that," he said, with a grim smile. "Luk's ter me as if ye were goin' ter try an' cut me out."

"Oh! no fear of that, at all. It kind of occurs to me that this Prescott may be the Preston of whom I am in search, but I may easily be mistaken. It won't do no harm to make a cautious investigation, at least."

"No, it won't, that's a fact; but ye see, thar's sumthin' else that absorbs yer personal attention jest now."

"What?"

"I'll tell ye. I was down ter ther Delaware, a spell ago, ter-day, when along cum Alberts, rigged up ter kill, along w' another feller—a pal o' his, jest out o' Moya—an' they wanted ter hire a little steam tug."

"Well?"

"Waal, I've kinder bin puzzlin' my bump o' phrenology as ter what fer them chaps wanted thet tug fer. Alberts has a yacht of his own, an' is sum'at acquainted w' ther riggin' o' water crafts. But I reckon he hain't agoin' ter take no moonlight excursion on sech a tug."

"Did he hire it, then?"

"Yes. Paid slap down fer it; but didn't want ter use it till ter-night, well on ter midnight."

"Oh! probably he has some trip under view, necessitating a stanch craft," the colonel said.

"Yes, mebbe; though his yacht is a good race-hoss, an' ar' widely known fer its grace an' cimetery."

"Perhaps you have formed some idea as to the nature of his errand, have you not?"

"Well, yes; I reckon I twig ther durned Jew-sharp's game. It's one o' two things—either he's goin' ter help intercept ther Sea Breeze, or else he's goin' ter rob your ship o' ther fortune you've fetched across the water."

The colonel started, violently.

"By Heaven! maybe you're right! If you had not spoken of it, I should not have thought of such a thing—but, now, I have no doubt but what the accursed Jew is bent on boarding the Duchess, for the purpose you have mentioned. Something must be done."

"Yes, ef ye don't want 'er part w' yer fortin'," Bob assured. "What time is it by your turnip?"

The colonel glanced at his watch.

"Just midnight," he said.

"Which be about ther time ther Jew was ter start. Whar does yer ship lay?"

"In Delaware Bay, nearly opposite the mouth of the Delaware. I left her there, believing the treasure would be safer out of the city limits."

"Phew! there's where ye made a mistake. How many is there aboard?"

"Two—the engineer and a trusty old seaman, whom I have long had in my employ. The rest of the hands I discharged for a vacation as soon as we dropped anchor."

"Then, ef we don't put in our say, mighty suddint, yer fortin's a goner, you bet!" Boss Bob declared. "Ther Jew an' his pal aire up ter snuff, an' et won't take 'em long ter git away w' yer two chaps."

"True! true! But, what shall I do? It will be next to impossible for me to reach the Duchess ahead of them, unless I can charter a swift steamer."

"Which ye can't do, short o' the Delaware," Boss Bob said, grimly. "But, I've got a plan worth two o' yourn. Can ye pull a good stiddy stroke?"

"Ah! yes. I flatter myself few better oarsmen ever glided over the moody Thames."

"Then, mebbe we're all hunk yet, tho' I've a forebodin' we'll git in too late. Come! let's git

to bizness. Hello, ther', Nondescript, you rascal!"

In answer to the Bootblack King's call, there was a commotion in the straw, at one corner of the bin, and the person of the Nondescript came into view.

"Come!" Boss Bob said, sharply. "Help me git out the Long Tom!"

The trio then descended the stairs to the lower portion of the building, and Bob and his strange companion brought forth a long regatta shell, with four oars, and seating capacity for three persons. This was borne down to the water's edge, and Col. Rutherford soon found himself out upon the river, with a pair of oars in his hands, in company with the two young Arabs, who, in London, he would not have deigned to notice. The second pair of oars were manipulated by Boss Bob, while the Nondescript held the tiller, his strange owl-like eyes peering ahead sharply into darkness.

A thorough oarsman, it took Colonel Rutherford but a moment to learn that he had found his equal in the young bootblack.

Superior in strength to most youths of his size and years; quick and precise, with accuracy of measure, Boss Bob was well skilled as an oarsman.

And as the colonel was the same, the twain found it an easy task to row together, and sent the long shell plowing through the water at a rapid rate.

The keen eye of the Nondescript kept the prow straight in the center of the river, except when some larger boat loomed up in its path—then he would veer it enough to one side to avoid a collision.

Market, Chestnut and South street bridges were passed, and still the two oarsmen plied their oars steady and strong, each dip bending the ash blades, and shooting the boat along like a thing of life. The colonel was the first to perspire, but he kept resolutely at his work for he knew that much depended upon his reaching the Duchess ahead of the rascally Jew.

Boss Bob seemed equally interested that they should reach their destination on time; but, unlike the colonel, he did not easily perspire, for he was tough and rugged, and inured to all sorts of hardships.

"T'won't take long, now," he said as they passed the bluff's at the rear of Woodlands Cemetery. "Ef we keep on at this rate, we'll git there afore Alberts, w'ich would tickle me like a fish."

"Ah! it would also put me at ease," the colonel said, anxiously. "But, something tells me that we will be too late. A steam tug, if rightly managed can double on our time."

"True ag'in," Boss Bob assented, sniffing the salt water that exhaled from the spray of their oars. "But, sumthin' may have detained 'em—mebbe they won't durst board the Duchess, until the night gits darkest, jest before dawn."

"We will hope so, until we learn differently," was the colonel's reply.

Then they rowed on, with increased speed, through the gloom of the night.

"Keep yer eye peeled fer the Harbor Perlice, 'Script," Bob cautioned. "Ef they was ter spot us a-pullin' away, like this, they'd most likely want ter interview us, which would waste preshus time."

Then on again, they went.

Neither of the trio had been over the course before, and Boss Bob was somewhat deceived as to the distance they had to go before reaching the outlet into the Delaware.

Work the best they could, it was after 3 A. M., ere they shoved out into the bay.

Darkness reigned supreme, except for an occasional starlike gleam that came across the bay, locating the anchorage of various ships.

"Hold up a minute," the colonel said, "till I can get my bearings. I shall have to look around me, till I find my ship." Accordingly the oars were allowed a rest, and the lawyer gazed around him.

"Ah! there's the Duchess," he exclaimed pointing to the south-east—the ship with the light at the top of the mainmast. "Ahead we go—lively, now!"

And, once more they bent to their oars. In half an hour they came to a neat, stanch-looking steamer; in five minutes more, leaving the Nondescript in the boat, the colonel and Boss Bob were on deck.

And there, lying bound and gagged, they found the engineer and seaman, whom the colonel had left in command.

Both Rutherford and Boss Bob knew what this meant:—Albert Alberts and his confederate had already been there!

As quickly as possible, they were liberated and assisted to their feet.

"Quick, now!" the colonel cried; "tell me the worst—what this means—all!"

"The money's all gone, capt'in," the seaman said, bowing his head. "We were surprised by a couple of chaps, in masks, and as they 'covered' us, an' threatened to blow our brains out if we resisted, we had the choice of death, or acquiescence. We took the latter!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE VERMONT SCORES A HIT—TWO LETTERS.

MRS. PRESCOTT sat in her own private parlor of the great mansion—sat with her fair face radiant with smiles, and listened to the words of a foppish, stylishly-dressed fellow, who lounged in an easy-chair before her.

"Le Grande," my lady said, "you have been a faithful friend to me, and more than once I have felt it was for my best to fly from this home, and seek shelter and protection from you."

"Aw! Sylvia, why did you not? You know, aw! that your reception would have been most welcome. It was a rash move of yours, my dear Mrs. Prescott—that of giving your hand where your heart could not go."

"True, but the thought of being the mistress of such a home, and of so much gold, impressed me greatly, and caused me to wed a man whom I never did and never can care for."

"It is not yet too late to leave him. His financial ruin is now almost a matter of certainty. I was talking with Alberts, to-day, and he assured me that the Sea Breeze would not touch port at all. So you see, Morton Prescott is again literally penniless, and his amiable daughter becomes the victim of the Jew."

Mrs. Prescott's eyes sparkled.

"Nothing could suit me better than to see the Jew take that girl!" she said, with a trifle of malice. "I hate her, even more than I do him. But, why is it that the Sea Breeze will not arrive?"

"Alberts did not say in so many words, but hinted that she was liable to touch bottom before she touched port. It may be possible, however, that she will turn up, all safe and sound, after the 10th of September at one minute to twelve o'clock."

"You think not, though?"

"Exactly. And in case it does not come in, Morton Prescott will have to recommence life on a smaller scale, and your fashionable friends will notice you no more. In that case, you had better quit him, for me. He has no culture; I have. He will have no money; I have. You know how I get it; what of it? You love me, you say."

"I will think—I will think about it," the merchant's wife said. "If I could only—"

The door opened, and a servant entered the room.

"If you please, ma'am," he said, bowing, "there's a countryman at the door, who wants to see the master. I said he was not in, but he insists on seeing the missus, then."

"Tell him to go away, Dick. I do not receive visitors at this hour—nor at any other hour do I receive country clodhoppers. Order him to be gone."

"Yes'm—ah! oh! hem! There's the fellow, now, missus, cum in wid our invitation."

And, sure enough, a burly figure pushed past the servant, and entered the room.

And the man was Joshua Evergreen!

"Howdy do, aunty," he said, advancing toward Mrs. Prescott, with outstretched hand. "Gol darn me ef I ain't glad ter see ye! Where's uncle Mort, an' ther rest o' the folks?"

"Sir?" Mrs. Prescott said, rising, haughtily. "Who are you, and what do you mean by this intrusion?"

"Haw! haw! Guess ye don't know me, mebbe! I'm Josh Evergreen, frum Plunket, Vermont, an' I cum down ter see ther Centennial, and uncle Mort, and the rest o' you. You're uncle Mort's second wife, eh? Waal, that accounts fer yer not knowin' me. Gosh darn my boots, you're a good looker, anyhow. Uncle Mort he allus were a good jedge o' weemin. Phew! guess I'll set down, fer I'm almighty tired. Been trampin around this gum-blasted city fer every since I arriv', and hev had enuff adventures ter fill a dickshunary."

"Sir!" Mrs. Prescott said, again, with supreme stiffness, "your intrusion here is unpardonable. I do not know you, nor do I care to make the acquaintance of your country highness. If you came to see my husband, the servant will show you to the cellar kitchen, where you may await his return from town."

"Git out, will ye!" Joshua grunted, both surprised and offended. "I guess I shan't do nothin' o' the kind. This an' uncle Mort's house, an' I s'pect I'll hev the best it affords. Ye needn't git yer back up, 'cause I cum from Plunket. I'm gol-darned sure thar's jest as good folks in Plunket as thar is in Philadelphia; an' ef ye doan't want to know me ye can do the other thing. I doan't ask no odds of no female critter thet ever breathed, I doan't, 'cept they treat me decent."

Sylvia Prescott grew fairly livid with rage. To be thus bearded in her own apartments by a rough son of the rural districts, was something too horrible for her sensitive nerves to stand, and she turned to her companion, in despair.

"Le Grande, my dear, I appeal to you to protect me from insult, and abuse!" she cried.

"Hello!" Josh ejaculated, as he took a good look at the dandy. "Gosh darn my buttons ef you ain't the same chap who stole my ten dollars, up to the Centenyal, an' afterward got garning frum ther judge. Yes! sir-ee! I know you now."

And to his feet the brawny son of the State of Vermont leaped, his sledge-hammer fists doubling up, suggestively.

"Yas, I know ye," he continued, grimly, as Le Grande, alias Fitz Noodle, fidgeted, and grew pale. "I know ye jest like a calf knows sweet milk frum buttermilk, an' I swore, when the judge freed ye, thet I'd take thet ten dollars out o' yer gol-darned hide. Shouldn't wonder ef this was ordained ter be ther opportunity I want, ter tan out yer jacket, you mean skunk, an' I'm goin' ter do it. Mebbe I am a country clodhopper, as ye call it, but I can lick you or any other stuck-up chap that ever wore paper collars, you hear me! So, which way I've want it—right frum ther shoulder, or shall I pick ye up an' throw ye down-stairs? Jest as lief do one as 'tuther."

"You had best not lay hands on me, you coarse booby!" Le Grande cried, thrusting his hand significantly into his hip pocket. "I will shoot you, like a dog."

"Oh! ye will, will ye?" Josh growled, savagely. "Gol-darn it, ef I only had a revolver, I could shoot, too. I'll be gum-blasted, though, ef I believe you've got one."

"Better come at me, and see!" the 'confider' gritted, fiercely, although there was a perceptible nervousness in his manner which did not escape the eye of Josh.

"Guess I'd better tew," he replied, chuckling. "Don't imagine thet I'd git hurt much."

The next instant he had bounded forward, and planted one of his great fists full in the face of the dandy villain, in a way that evidenced his skill in pugilism.

Without so much as a groan, Le Grande dropped to the floor insensible.

"Thar! that's ther way we knock down cattle, up in Plunket," Josh declared, turning to Mrs. Prescott, with a broad grin. "Didn't I give thet durned skunk an old sockdollar, tho? He jest went down as perlite as yer please."

"Villain! outrageous brute! how dare you thus insult my dear friend? Get out of the house, sir, or I will have you horsewhipped."

"Won't do it," the Vermonter declared. "This is uncle Mort's house, an' I'm goin' ter stay right heer, till he comes. Ef ye don't like my style, ma'am, ye can go into a corner, an' suck yer thumb."

"Hello! here; what is the matter?" a deep voice demanded, and the next minute Morton Prescott stepped into the room. "What is it, Sylvia; who is this fellow, and what does he want here?"

"I'll tell ye who I am," the Vermonter cried springing to his feet. "I'm yer nephew, Josh Evergreen, frum Plunket, Vermont, an' I come down here to see ther elerphant, but yer woman here, she do not like me, an' tells me to git out o' the house."

"Indeed! If you are an Evergreen, you are welcome," the merchant said, shaking him by the hand. "Sylvia, this is Mr. Evergreen, my nephew. His mother was a sister of Daisy, my first wife."

"Ah! I always imagined the first Mrs. Prescott was from the rural districts," was the reply, with a faint sneer.

"Gol-darn it, she had better breedin' than you have, anyhow," Josh averred, savagely.

"Sylvia, you will please treat Mr. Evergreen with more consideration, for I've seen and heard quite enough to give him my confidence," Morton Prescott said, sternly. "Come, Josh, let's seek my luncheon table."

"Ef you say so, uncle Mort, I hain't no ob-

jections. I hain't had a good square meal since I left Plunket, gol-darn me ef I hev. I fetched along sum home-made cookies, but, ye see, sassengers ain't ripe yet, an' ther cookies played out, afore I got here. Yes, I don't care ef I do eat a bite."

Giving only a glance of wrath at Sylvia, and at the still insensible man upon the floor, the merchant led the way to his own apartments, in which with his new visitor he dined, pleasantly.

Then, leaving Josh to finish the wine, he donned his hat, and once more left his mansion, taking the first car for town.

After the announcement made by the seaman, Colonel Rutherford paced the deck slowly, for several minutes, his head bowed, and his face betraying the bitterness he felt at his loss.

"Which way did the rascals go?" he cried, at last, confronting the seaman.

"I don't know, capt'n, except that they came an' went over the starboard."

"Did you hear or see anything that would lead to the identification of the rascal?"

"But one thing, sir—I heard one call the other Oliver, and later, as they were descending to the cabin, he called him Mortimer."

"Ah!" the colonel said, with a little start.

"Kerwhoop! bet ye a shine I twig that chap, I do! Met him once, an' blacked his boots, on Market street bridge. I say, salty, did the other feller talk as ef he hed jest cum out from a Jew restaurant?"

"What he said was in a very broken way, sir."

"Then I've got the game collared, all Piccadilly. Curnel, ef ye'll invite me inter yer private offis, we'll put our heads tergether, providin' yours ain't buggy, an' compare notes."

Accordingly, the colonel led the way to his state-room, accompanied by Boss Bob and his companion, and soon all three were seated, facing each other.

"Now, then, let us hear from you," the Englishman said to Bob. "The money is gone, and must be recovered, if possible. If it cannot be, I shall have to give up my search for old Rutherford's heirs, as I would not care to hunt them up, only to tell them that I had lost the fortune."

"Guess you're about solid there," Boss Bob assented. "Ef ye don't recover ther money, an' ther heirs don't know nothin' about ther impendin' fortune, they won't feel a bit disappointed. Now, you told me thet one o' ther heirs was named Mortimer, didn't ye?"

"I did."

"Well, as I sed before, I blacked ther boots o' a feller, one night, on Market street bridge, who sed he was Oliver Mortimer, an' hed come down ter ther Centennial ter meet Col. Rutherford. He also inquired about Morton Prescott; an' after he went away, I found a packet of papers, which he must have dropped. I picked em up, an' gave 'em to the Nondescript fer safe-keepin', an' haven't thought ter examine 'em since. Mebbe they might throw some light on the subject of what ther Jew an' the feller, Mortimer, were doing tergether."

"True. Have you got the papers with you?"

"No—not unless the Nondescript has 'em. The owl-eyed boy shook his head."

"Then they're down in my escriptorio, whar I stop," the King of Bootblacks said. "S'posin' we slope in that direction, as we ain't liable to find out much more here."

"Very well. We will go at once. I desire to learn how this Mortimer ever came in possession of my name."

Accordingly, they took their departure from the Duchess, and pulled back for Philadelphia, over the Schuylkill course, arriving at the first starting point early in the forenoon.

Once more Boss Bob conducted the colonel to his lodgings in the disused bin of the coal-house, and from the old chest, which he unlocked, brought forth the papers which had been picked up on Market street bridge.

Examination proved them to be a couple of letters, minus their envelopes—the first one being from Alberts, the pawnbroker, and directed to Oliver Mortimer.

Colonel Rutherford glanced it over, and then read it aloud to Bob and the Nondescript, who listened attentively. It was as follows:

"MR. OLIVER MORTIMER, ESQ.:

"DEAR SIR—I have instituted the inquiries, as per your direction, and find that the fortune, of which you are a fourth heir, is deposited in the hands of Col. Rutherford, Maiden Lane, London. I await further orders from you.

DR. A. ALBERTS."

The next was from the Jew to Mortimer, but more to the point:

"PHILADELPHIA, PA., NOV.—75.

"DEAR MORTIMER—Your proposition was agreeable, and I at once set a London agent at work. From him I learn that Rutherford will sail for Philadelphia some time in July, on a search for the heirs, bringing with him the four fortunes. He will be recommended to me by Schauss & Co., and I'll work it with care. Make it your point to be here by the first of August, if possible, and we'll capture the game, and then divide the spoils. It will not be a hard thing to do, when we once get fairly to work, and the remuneration is worth the working for. If there is anything else you have to suggest, do so, believing me your faithful friend and confederate,

"ALBERT ALBERTS."

CHAPTER X.

THE ACT OF A DARING SCOUNDREL.

"KEERECT!" Boss Bob said, when the colonel had stopped reading. "Thet's ther key-note ter ther hull bizness, in er falsetter voice. Ther feller, Mortimer, hev'in an' hikin', hes left it in ther hands o' ther Jewsharp, an' he's figgered et out, an' got it down fine. So, twist you an' me, an' the Nondescript, heer, ther Jew an' Mortimer war ther ones thet robbed the Duchess."

"You are undoubtedly right," the colonel admitted. "I ut what *proof* is there of it?"

"Not much, sure's an oyster hates a Congressman. Ye couldn't swear thet Alberts were mixed up in ther affair; tharfore Mortimer's the only 'coon left ter clinch onter. Ef ther fortin's ever found, he'll hev ter be collared, an' treated ter ther prospects of a private lynch picnic, so't he'll turn State's evidence."

"Boy, again you are right! Before the stolen fortunes can be recovered, we must trap the man Mortimer. But, it may be a lifetime, ere we can find him."

"Most likely he's skinned out already, but it won't be no harm ter look fer him. S'posin' we take a skip down to the Delaware, an' see ef the tug hes ben returned yet?"

The colonel hesitated a moment; his eyes were contrasting Bob's ragged and dirty accouterments with his own elegant attire.

"Oh! ye needn't be afeared o' n'y tugs," the bootblack said, quickly noticing the hesitation. "Ef you're partial ter walkin' wi' a gentl'man o' my style o' garb, you can take one side o' ther thurrofare, an' I'll take t'other."

"No! no! my boy. Though your garments are not quite presentable, your heart is clean, and I am not ashamed to promenade the streets with you. You shall have a new outfit of clothing."

"Bet yer a dollar on that! Don't want no other tugs. I'd make a gallus lookin' swell, now, wouldn't I? Ha! ha! ha! Ef ther th'boys was ter see Boss Bob decorated in high-tide raiment, ther price of onhealthy hen-fruit wold advance amazingly! No, sir-ee. I don't want no better tugs till I run fer Congress or Senator, an' then I'll scoop et ter all ther toys."

The colonel smiled. He saw that there was no use of arguing with this young Arab, whose head was so "level."

Leaving the Nondescript at the coal-house, Bob and the colonel hid themselves to the Wire Bridge, and there took the Race and Vine streets cars for the Delaware river.

The car was well filled, and during the ride the Londoner's pride was fully tested, for Boss Bob's irrepressible chatter constantly rung in his ear, and he responded promptly.

Many curious glances were turned upon him by the fashionable ones in the car—many wondering thoughts why so distinguished a looking personage should engage in conversation with an incorrigible bootblack.

If the colonel knew of these thoughts and glances, he did not heed them, except by a slight flush which was perceptible upon his face.

On reaching the termination of the car line, Bob and the colonel left the car, and walked down to Delaware avenue and the river. In the course of ten minutes' walk along this thoroughfare, they came to the pier from which the steam-tug had been hired by Alberts.

They found the owner, a stout little Irishman, seated upon an empty half-barrel, gazing out onto the dark blue waters of the restless river.

"Hello, Mike!" Bob saluted. "The top av the mornin' to ye! Shure, an' has the *Virgin Mary* returned yet?"

"Divil a bit of it, Bob! Niver a won have I sene of it since she pointed her nose down the strame."

"Told ye so," said Bob, turning to the colonel. The cusses have slid off ter New York or Boston, an' thet's ther last ye'll see o' ther swag."

"I fear you are right. Let's go, however, and see if we can find Alberts. If he is guilty, he must in some way betray the fact."

They accordingly left the wharf and betook themselves to the pawnbroker's office, where, sure enough, they found the scheming Jew behind his counter.

"Ah, good-morning!" he exclaimed, as the colonel entered. "I vas habby to see you, Mister Rutherford. Vat success haff you made, may I ask?"

"None at all, sir; and I have come to apprise you that I shall need your services no longer, as I have concluded to prolong the search no further. Good-day, sir, until I know of you further."

"Tra! la! loo! old Jewsharp!" put in Boss Bob, as they left the shop. "Look out you don't get trapped yet. Ef thar's enny virtue in promises, I'll see you again."

"Well, did you observe anything suspicious in the looks of the rascal?" Rutherford demanded, as he and Bob retraced their steps toward the river, involuntarily.

"Tho't he looked kinder startled like when we entered, didn't he?"

"Yes; or at least it appeared to me so. But as we have no positive proof of his guilt, I guess it will hardly pay to bother with him."

"Not fer you. But I'll keep a kinder watch on him. He's playin' another keerd, too, w'ich I'm goin' ter gum, ef he tries ter flopp a trump. Hello! there she goes now!"

"Who?"

"Miss Prescott! Cum along! Now's yer chance for a knock-down!"

And, before the colonel was fully aware of it, he found himself standing in the presence of one of the prettiest girls he had ever met.

"Miss Prescott, this is Colonel Richard Rutherford, of the Queen's legal staff, who owns more'n two-thirds o' ther British island, an' has a prospect o' bein' a next king. Bein' an intimate friend o' mine, an' a gallus cove, w' lots o' swag an' no wives, I tho't you'd like to know him!" said Boss Bob, the essence of a mischievous spirit beaming from his eyes.

Pearl blushed, and bowed modestly; hesitated, was confused, until the colonel came to her rescue.

"You will of course excuse our irrepressible friend here," he said, with a smile. "Bob means all right. I am most happy for this privilege of knowing you, I am sure. I bid you a pleasant good-day."

"Good-day, sir," the merchant's daughter replied, smilingly, and continued on her way.

"Bob, you young rascal, I've half a mind to give you the cat-o'-nine-tails for your audacity!" the colonel said, turning with a flushed face to the King of Bootblacks. "You not only placed the young lady in a queer position, but put me to my wits' ends. Your etiquette won't answer for all occasions."

"Hang ther etarket!" Bob retorted, independently. "Wot's ther use o' bein' bashful over nothin'? Wot's ther use o' goin' thru this world ef ye don't know sumbody? Guess I know wot I'm about! Ef I see any consarned male or female I want'er know, I chip in an' interdoce myself, 'thout any mincin'. That's how I get along so famuss. Fer instance, that's how I got acquainted w' Grant. See'd him standin' in ther Continental one day, an' so I waltzed right up ter him. I axed him was he 'Lysses, an' he sed he was. Then I interdooced myself, an' asked him if he'd 'smile, an' he sed he would. Since then, whenever he sees me, he sings out, 'Wie gahts, Bob!'"

The colonel did not reply.

They soon reached a telegraph office, and here the King of Bootblacks took leave of his distinguished friend, he proceeding along with peculiar business *sang froid*, while the colonel entered the office before mentioned.

Here he sent two dispatches to the chiefs of police in New York and Boston, containing descriptions of the Virgin Mary tug-boat, and of the man Mortimer—which had been furnished him by Bob—with orders for apprehension, and so forth.

He then sought his hotel, to await the issue, although he had no faith that he would ever hear from either the man or the boat.

He had not as yet seen all of the Centennial that he wished to, and he was resolved to put forth every effort to secure the restoration of the prize which he had lost.

Another thing had quickened his resolve to remain longer in the City of Homes—the glimpse of Pearl Prescott's face which he had gained.

That evening, while seated in his office at his warehouse, with a weary, troubled expression upon his face, Morton Prescott received a visitor in the person of Alberts, the pawnbroker.

The Jew had found the door unlocked, and entered without ceremony, as was his wont.

"Ah! goot-evening, my frient," he said, as he beheld the merchant. "I see dot you vas still in business."

"Why should I not be?" Prescott demanded, somewhat savagely. "Do you imagine I'm going to give up business, because a rascal like you is conniving at my ruin? No, sir. I defy you!"

"Ish dot so, Mister Prescott? I don'd vas understand you. You act ash if you vas mad at your benefactor."

"My benefactor—you my benefactor! Ha! ha! I see you are inclined to be facetious. Alberts, do not for a moment think that I do not understand you—your whole game, from beginning to end, for you will be mistaken. I know you, and your plot, but you shall not win. When your devilish schemes seem most sure of success, I will defeat you."

"You will do dot, Mister Prescott?"

"Ay! I will do, it, Heaven helping me!"

"But what if Heafen don'd vas help you—vot den?"

"Heaven will help me. Whoever relies upon the Lord, loses nothing."

"Yaw! yaw! You must keep on d'inking dose thoughts, unt dot vill pe all right. All de difference, I vant my monish purdy quick, or I dakes your girl ash my wife."

"Curse you, no! You shall never lay a hand upon the child, if I have to murder her myself. Her death would be a thousand times preferable to the knowledge that she was in the power of a ruthless villain like you."

"Ve will see apoud dot, mine frient Prescott. Der law vill giff me her, when I show him dot paper. If I do not get her alive, I claim her pody, unt wreak mine vengeance on dot."

"Bah! I will not listen to you. The Sea Breeze may touch harbor soon enough so that I can dispose of the cargo, and meet my obligation to you, you villain."

"I am afraid not. You don'd vas need hurry up matters, for I jest ash lief half der girl ash der monish" was the chuckling reply, as the Jew bowed himself out.

From the warehouse he proceeded direct to the Prescott mansion in his private carriage.

The door was opened by a servant in livery.

"What's wanted?" he demanded, eying the pawnbroker, suspiciously.

"Oh! tell Miss Prescott that Colonel Rutherford would like to see her, in the parlor," Alberts replied, pushing past the servant, into the hall, and thence to the grand parlor, the door of which was open.

With a growl of something about "no cards," the servant went away to deliver the lying message.

In the parlor Alberts waited, near the door, a cunning expression upon his features. That some evil purpose was in his mind, was evident.

Soon light footsteps came down the stairs, and the graceful figure of pretty Miss Pearl had swept into the parlor."

The next instant Alberts closed the door through which she had just entered, and locked it, putting the key into his own pocket.

As he did so, Pearl wheeled around, with a gasp of horror.

"Albert Alberts, you here!" she articulated, staggering back, as though smitten by an unseen hand.

"Exactly, my dear Miss Prescott; I am here. Undoubtedly you are glad to see me?"

"Glad to see you, sir? Ah! I see; you are joking, in a villain's way. No! I am not glad to see you. What brings you here, pray, where your presence is least desired?"

"Oh! as to that, the time is drawing near when we must become as one, in the bonds of wedlock, and I deemed it best to call around and get better acquainted with you. Besides, there is a grand ball to-night, in the lower end of town, and I thought perhaps you might need an escort."

"Sir! do you think I would accept of you as such? I would not trust a hair of my head, within your reach!"

"Tut! tut! One would infer that I was a terrible desperado, to hear you talk. Surely you will be more amiable after we are married?"

"We will never be married, sir! I have learned of your villainy, in hindering the Sea Breeze, and that alone I think would free me from the claim. But if it should not, I would take my own life before I would be forced to wed a man of your stamp."

"You swear to this?"

"A thousand times if necessary!"

"Then we will secure you beforehand, to make sure!" the pawnbroker cried, with sudden fierceness, as he left his chair, and sprang upon her.

The move had evidently been premeditated, for he was armed with a heavy shawl, with which he dextrously enveloped her head before she could scream.

When she did attempt to give the alarm, her cries of course were in a measure drowned, for the villain had raised her in his strong arms, and held the shawl closely over her mouth.

"There, curse you!" he muttered, savagely. "You shall not cheat me out of my game, before I've won it. I've got you fast enough, ship or no ship. The next thing is to get to my carriage without being observed."

With his victim in his arms, the pawnbroker managed to unlock and open the door, after which he peered cautiously into the hall.

Fortunately for him the coast was clear.

"The next thing, is to listen!" he mused.

He approached the door opening upon the street, for this purpose, when it was suddenly flung open, and Boss Bob, the King of the Bootblacks, and his strange companion, the Nondescript, stood confronting him!

"No yer don't, old Jewsharp!" the former cried. "Jest you drop thet gal, or I'll drop you, quicker'n ever a Jerseyman ever made a watermelon look sick—you hear us, Maloney and Co., perfessionals!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE KING COUNTERPLOTS—HEART-EATER.

WITH a frightful curse Alberts took in the situation at a glance, and even as quick he had formed his resolve. Dropping Pearl from his arms in no gentle manner, he made a sudden bound forward through the open portal, into the street. The next instant he had leaped into his carriage and was driven furiously away.

The result of his sudden rush into the street, had been to overturn both Bob and the Nondescript, as their barricade of the passage did not withstand the force of his precipitate rush.

"Well, may I be swallered for a Jarsey eyester, ef that Jewsharp didn't put in a good stroke fer liberty, anyhow," the Bootblack King muttered, as he picked himself up, and felt his bones to learn if they were in their usual places. "Blamed ef I didn't think ther end o' time hed cum. Eh! Nondescript—hurt any by yer sudden ante?"

The owl-eyed boy shook his head.

"Waal, ther next thing's ter look after ther girl. 'Spect mebbe she's fainted. Wimmen folks 'most allus faint when they don't know what else ter do."

When they re-ascended the steps and entered the hall, they found the merchant's daughter awaiting them.

"Oh! you dear good fellow," she said, advancing when she saw Boss Bob, and extending her fair hand, fearlessly. "How can I ever repay you for saving me from a terrible fate? I was just wondering whom I had to thank for the intervention that prevented the Jew from carrying me away with him."

"Well, et's me an' my pard, as ye perseeve," Bob assured. "Miss Prescott, make ye acquainted w' ther Nondescript. He's dumb, is ther Nondescript, an' don't often wiggle his jaw, in ther way o' conversation, but he's famous on rakin' in ther p'ints an' saltin' 'em down so they won't sp'ile, with age."

"I am glad to see you both," Pearl said, earnestly. "Come into the parlor, and be seated, while you tell me how it was you were so opportunely on hand, just as that villain was about to carry me off."

"Oh! that waz easy ernuff," Boss Bob replied, as he and the Nondescript accepted seats in the grand parlor. "We'd bin spottin' ther pawnbroker, jest fer ther fun o' ther thing, an' follered him up heer, calcylatin' he was up to sum deviltry. That's how, an' now, as time is money ter us, I've got a little suggestion ter make; I'll make et, an' then git ter other bizness."

"Very well; I will give you my attention, I assure you," Pearl replied. "I feel that what you would say interests papa and myself."

"You're purty good at guessin', you aire. Yes et's about yer interests, thet I would speak. Ther matter concerns ther arrival o' ther Sea Breeze. It's gittin' purty near time she war makin' herself manifest, an' et's also purty near time yer Governor know'd where his chips are comin' frum, ter meet ther Jew's paper."

"Very true. But I fear papa does not know which way to turn," Pearl replied, anxiously. "He still has faint hopes that the ship will arrive in time for him to discharge the cargo and

get the cash for it. Several prominent retail merchants stand ready to take it off his hands on sight, at a good price. But, ah!—I am so fearful that it will not arrive!"

"Kereet. You hev cause ter fear, fer even ef ther ship comes wi'in a day o' port, she'll not get heer, unless we do sumthin' ourselves. Alberts will send that Bill Heart-Eater out, ter scuttle her, an' et depends on us whether we git ter ther Sea Breeze afore he does, or not!"

"We, you say?"

"Yas, we! you must go along an' tend ther steerin' oar. Nondescript an' I'll pull ther stroke."

"But surely, you would not think of venturin' out to sea in an open boat?"

"Dunno. 'Spect so. When a feller hain't got no ship, he's got ter take up wi' a tub, ain't he? Pd swim, afore I'd let ther Jewsharp beat."

Miss Prescott laughed a little.

The earnestness of this irrepressible street urchin amused her; and then, too, it added flame to her own spirit on the subject.

"Bravo!" she said, gladly. "You are a brave, good boy, and I like you for it. Of course the Jew must not be permitted to triumph, and so long as I can be of any use, you may command my aid."

"Now, then, thet sounds bizness like," Boss Bob nodded, wisely. "But, there's one pint we should cum ter an understandin' on. Mebbe I'm jest as old as yerself, ef I do black boots, an' ye must treat me wi' consideration ekal to my years. That's all. I don't wanten be counted no nabob, fer I despise a nabob wuss'n I do a green Jarseyman. Ef ever I rise, et must be ter Guvner or President, or else I'll never go back on Bixby's Best. You hear me?"

"Mr.—Bob, why is it you hold such an antipathy against the Jerseymen?" Pearl asked, smiling.

"Humph! ain't afeard ter tell ye that. Jersey folks live on salt-water clams, an' shuck eyesters, an' watermelons, an' ther combined effect is ter make ther feet grow big. Then, they cum over heer, an' expect we o' the purfession ter shine 'em fer ther same price we do ordinary mortals. Ef we won't do et, we lose ther custom. Bizness is bizness, ye know, an' we'd rather like ther Jarsey fellers ef it wasn't fer ther big feet."

"Oh! I have often wondered the reason why the street urchins were so prejudiced. You were speaking about reaching the Sea Breeze before the man sent by the Jew pawnbroker. How should we be able to do, so not knowing how to get in its path?"

"Oh! et'll take a leetle figgerin', but I 'spect thar ain't monny such examples like thet, which me an' ther Nondescript ken't wrastle with, when we 'zamine our compass."

"When will this man Heart-Eater start?"

"Dunno, thet, yet. Ken soon find out tho'. 'Script, he's famous at nosin' out such matters. G'ess ye'd better go an' find out at once, too," Bob said, turning to his queer companion. "Run down ther Jew, an' shadder him, an' ye'll eventually find yer cue!"

The Nondescript's eyes twinkled knowingly as he arose with a bow. Evident it was that Boss Bob had in him a safe and trusty companion, whose love was a surety of his faith.

Pearl showed him out, and then returned to Bob.

"I have a better plan than that of attempting to find the Sea Breeze in a common row-boat," she said, seating herself. "I have a little sum of money which I have saved up, from time to time, and with it, we might possibly be able to charter a small steamboat, or—"

"Good! bully fer you!" Boss Bob cried, tossing his cap into the air, enthusiastically. "Thet is jest ther fit. How much collateral hev ye got, an' then I can give a dog-noses of the case at once?"

"I have forty-one dollars."

"Then we're all hunk! There's a feller down t South street wharf, Delaware, who has got a little steam pleasure-boat, called the Belle o' Bosting, an' she jest can tork bizness, when her steam's up, an' scoot right away from the Harbor Police boat, w'ich hain't got many ekals in these parts. Can rent her fer twenty-five a day, wi' a hand ter run her, an' ef ye say so, dish over yer collateral an' I'll go an' nail her, ter once. Don't make no difference 'bout ther cash bein' short, fer I ain't got no empty sock, after blackin' boots all my days."

"Then, go at once, and secure the boat, and find out what time we had better start. I am not afraid to go with you, and will be ready when you come for me."

"Kereet! I'll go at once then, an' will get as early a start as possible, fer the sooner we

reach ther Sea Breeze, ther more apt we aire ter git ahead o' Bill Heart-Eater."

Accordingly Pearl gave him what money she had, fully trusting to his honesty, and equipped with it, the young Bootblack King left the mansion and hurried with all speed toward South street wharf.

Within the hour he had "nailed" the Belle of Boston.

Later that same evening, after Pearl had retired, Morton Prescott returned from town, and sought his wife's apartments. Not finding her in the parlor, he entered her bedchamber, but she was not there. Somewhat surprised at this absence, he began to look around him, and upon a dressing-case found a sheet of monogram paper, containing a few hastily written words, as follows:

"DEAR MORTON—By the time you read this I shall have placed many miles between you and me. Of course you have long known that I did not care for you—that your wealth and social position were the only ties that bound me to you. And, now, as both the wealth and position will slip away, leaving you little less than a beggar, I deem it only fair that I should also fade away from your view. I have gone with my dear Le Grande, whom I worshiped before ever I saw you. Of course you will not seek for me, for you are doubtless as glad to get rid of me as I am of you. SYLVIA."

That was all; and the merchant gazed upon the paper, with whitening face and glaring eyes, a groan of anguish coming from the depths of his heart.

"May God in heaven help her, as I cannot!" he murmured, as he turned and staggered down the stairs and out into the night.

After his escape from the merchant's mansion, Albert Alberts was driven to Broad and Market streets, where he left the cab, and dismissed it.

His features were now covered with an immense black beard, which gave him quite a villainous, if not a distinguished, appearance.

Walking down Market street to Ninth, he crossed through that street to Chestnut, where he had, on a previous night, waited, and intercepted the ex-pirate, Bill Heart-Eater.

Taking up the same position, to-night, he waited for over an hour, but could see nothing of the ruffian in the passing crowd.

At last, with a growl of impatience, he struck off of Chestnut street, southward, and walked briskly.

In half an hour he brought up before a dirty brick tenement house in Alaska street, and ascended a pair of stairs to the third landing.

Opening a door immediately at his left, he entered, without ceremony, an apartment that was a novelty in the way of dilapidation.

The plastering had for the most part fallen off; the windows were ornamented with cobwebs and stains of tobacco-juice, while a portion of the floor had been torn up—probably for kindling wood.

Everywhere were dirt and disorder; the furniture was broken; upon a three-legged table were a pitcher and glass; the wall was hung with pistols, cutlasses, ropes, knives, and various implements belonging to a burglar's profession.

In a broken arm-chair by the table, on which sputtered a candle, sat the ex-pirate, with his head dropped forward, as if in a drunken sleep.

The pawnbroker uttered a curse, at the sight, and went forward and shook him savagely.

"Wake up, you drunken fool!" he growled. "What do you mean by gorging yourself with poison, when I need you the most?"

Heart-Eater aroused, partly, and gazed at the Jew with a leer.

"Oh! it's you, is it?" he grunted, gruffly. "If you want anything of me spit it out. I'm Bill Heart-Eater from the high seas."

"You pe von drunken loafer!" the Jew replied, sourly.

"Cheese it!" the other returned, significantly, as he drew a long knife from his bootleg, and tested the edge by shaving a few hairs from the back of his hand. "I've told yer 'bout enuff to drop that Jew gabble, an' I'll have a heart to eat, ef ye don't mind."

Alberts shuddered.

The wolfish glare in the bloodshot eyes of the ruffian did not conduce to his ease.

"I forgot—I'll be more careful hereafter," he said, apologetically. "I came to see you on business. Have you heard anything more in regard to the ship?"

"Not a bubble."

"You think she will touch the waters of the bay by the 9th?"

"Et wouldn't belay my ideas ef she did. It has been fair breezy weather ever since she started, and, what with her steam and sails, she ought to touch fresh water by noon, the ninth."

"She must not be hailed before that. If you work right, you can creep up on her, in the night before, can you not?"

"Leave that to me. I shall leave here so as to get to the bay before sundown, the 8th, in time to make observations. I have an old Spanish glass there in a chest, that'll diskiver ther nature an' name o' a craft sixty miles away, an' I can soon tell my game. I'll board her in the night, an' fix things right afore she touches fresh water."

"Good. Your plan is excellent. The sooner she is scuttled, the safer it will be for me, for the merchant means mischief in some way, but I have not yet learned how. Anyhow, he has parties waiting for the cargo, at a moment's warning, when the Sea Breeze touches port. She must not touch port, or my money has gone, and I have lost the girl in the bargain."

"Don't ye fear. I'll fix her so she won't sight Philadelphia afore September 12th," the ex-pirate said, with a villainous chuckle. "But I must have a hundred dollars ter get me a tug. Thar's one I've got my eye on thet can be hired fer that amount."

Without a word, the pawnbroker took out his plethoric purse, and counted out the desired amount, and Heart-Eater raked it in greedily.

"That will 'nail' the 'Belle of Boston,'" he said, peering into the empty pitcher. "Now I've only one other want, and I shall be ready to tackle the job with a will."

"What is that?" Alberts replied.

"Money enough ter git on a big drunk, so as ter steady my nerves," the ruffian said, with a wolfish laugh.

"I brought you along a bottle of rare cognac, here," and the pawnbroker drew a great flat flask from an inner pocket. "Get as drunk as you please; only see to it that you attend to business."

"Ef I don't, ye can cum here an' cut my heart out, an' I'll eat it myself," the ruffian answered, as he seized the bottle eagerly.

With a grim smile, the Jew buttoned his coat, took his hat, and leaving Heart-Eater in his room, made his way out of the tenement-house, and as rapidly as possible from Alaska street.

Left alone with the bottle of liquor, Heart-Eater proceeded straightway to business, and in the course of fifteen minutes he had drained it to the dregs!

In the course of ten minutes more his head dropped forward, and presently he pitched head foremost upon the floor, and lay there in a drunken stupor. Though a man of strong will and prodigious physical strength, he had to succumb at last to that demon with whom no man can wrestle long and successfully.

Perhaps an hour passed after the ruffian fell forward upon the floor, when a pile of dirty blankets, which had lain carelessly heaped in one corner of the room, began to unroll, and out of them came the form of no less a person than the Nondescript! There was a quiet expression of triumph upon his face which bespoke the fact that he had been listening, having some time previously secured a position in the ex-pirate's quarters.

After leaving his place of concealment, he searched around the room for some time, and finally found the marine spy glass of which Heart-Eater had spoken to the Jew.

Armed with this, he then shook his fist at the slumbering ruffian, and left the place.

He had heard all that was necessary to in that direction.

CHAPTER XII.

EVERGREEN UNMASK.—BOSS BOB'S MISSION.

FRIDAY, September 8, 1876, dawned upon the city of Philadelphia, bright and warm, but brought with it no event of especial importance, publicly, more than the moving of mighty throngs of citizens and strangers, Centennialward. Each day that now passed but served to add to the mighty hosts that flocked from far and near to attend the grandest world's fair ever held.

In and around the mammoth Exposition every one seemed smiling and happy, and an observer would have wondered if there could be such a thing as unhappiness or woe in so sprightly and merry a gathering.

Perhaps not; we will hope so.

Upon this eighth morning of the month of September, Morton Prescott arose early, and left the mansion, as he supposed, before anyone else was up. He had not seen Pearl to speak

with her, but he was aware that she knew of his trouble, and sympathized with him.

As he left the house for the street, he found Joshua Evergreen seated on the front steps, engaged in whittling on a piece of pine wood he had somewhere picked up.

"What? you up already, Josh?" the merchant exclaimed, in surprise.

"Waal, yas, uncle Mort; I tho't I'd git up an' whittle a little," the Vermonter replied, with a grin; "an', 'side from that, I wanted ter see ye on bizness."

"Very well; I am going to my warehouse, and you may come along with me."

"Accordingly, I will," Evergreen replied, and he made haste to follow the merchant.

In the course of half an hour, both were seated in the latter's office; then Morton Prescott turned upon his relative, inquiringly.

"I am now ready to hear what you have to say," he said, gravely. "My time is limited, but I will hear from you."

"Well, it will not take long for me to make known my business," the other replied, his tone of voice and manner of speech entirely changed. "Allow me to introduce myself—Josh Evergreen, at your service, junior partner of the firm of Batchelder and Evergreen, Boston, and also your nephew. I am not lately from Vermont, but have been getting rich, and wishing to visit the Centennial, I concluded to have a little masquerade, by personating the honest but illiterate son of the State of Vermont."

A little washing off of paint, re-twisting of features, and the removal of wigs, and so forth, and I believe the change would be satisfactory, so pardon my absence, while I step over to my hotel, and restore myself."

He then took a smiling departure, but in the course of an hour a handsomely dressed, and not homely young man returned and seated himself in the merchant's office.

"You see the rich Josh, now," he said with a quiet smile; "so I'll further tell you my business here. Of course I came to do the Centennial, but that was not my sole motive in coming. I heard that you were in pecuniary difficulties, and having no lack of ready means, believed I might be of some assistance to you. And, now, while I smoke a cigar, I want you to tell me all about yourself and affairs, so that I may understand your case."

"My dear boy, I will willingly do so," the merchant replied, whereupon he related the situation of all his affairs, as is known to the reader. Joshua listened, with no little surprise and interest.

"It is a remarkable romance, from beginning to end," he said, as the merchant concluded. "A strange matter throughout. I think I know this Jew, however, who holds the mortgage upon my fair cousin, Pearl. Such a party borrowed a sum of money of us, a few years ago, upon misrepresentation, and failed to pay it back. We never made him any trouble, as we did not deem it worth while. But he is undoubtedly a deep rascal."

"In truth he is; and, rather than see my Pearl his wife, I'll kill her or him with my own hands."

"Bravely spoken! It would be a sacrilege to wed a Christian woman to such as he. And there shall be nothing of the kind. Wait. If your ship does not arrive on time, we will manage somehow to defeat this execrable scoundrel."

At this moment the door opened, and Boss Bob walked into the office, blacking kit in hand.

"Mornin'!" he said, with a nod to the merchant. "Tho't maybe I'll find ye heer. A cornered clam allus keeps close to his shell. Any cash jobs, hereabouts?"

"Well, yes; you may as well black my boots, I suppose. Bob, this is Mr. Evergreen, a nephew of mine, from Boston."

The youth wheeled suddenly, and surveyed the Bostonian critically.

"See heer!" he exclaimed, scratching his head through a rent in his cap. "I'm an eye-ster, ef I ain't a leetle fogged. That chap, Evergreen? No, sir-ee; ye can't discount me. Ther Evergreen I see'd was greener'n a green Jarsey melon, an' didn't luk no more like this chap than I luk like Guv'ner Hart-arnt."

"Nevertheless, we were one and the same party," Evergreen replied with a laugh—"only, instead of coming from Plunkit, Vermont, I came from the Hub."

"Well, ef thet doesn't beat Bixby's Best, may I never shine another understandin'" the boot-black exclaimed. "Sech a metamorphosis takes ine 'way off my cue. Beats ther Black Crook transformation all ter blazes. An' so

ye're a relation ter my friend, heer?" with a nod toward the merchant.

"Yes, a nephew, I believe."

Bob gave vent to a prolonged whistle, and then set to work at the merchant's boot, with an occasional shake, suggestive of how much he had been "taken in" on the Easterner.

When he had finished, he also blackened Evergreen's boots, after which he arose and turned to the merchant.

"Now, boss, if it's all ther same to you, I'd like ter give ye a little advice, concernin' yer own affairs. On course, I don't run this 'stablishment, an' 'tain't my lip-in; but ef ye're after my pattern o' architecture, ye'd rather take a hint than a hit, emny day."

"Certainly, my boy. If you have any suggestions to offer that you think may be of benefit to me, I shall be most happy to hear them."

"Kerect. Then, here goes. I'm goin' out ter save the Sea Breeze!"

"You?" the merchant ejaculated.

"Yes, I," was the sturdy reply. "I hate ter see villain triumph over cheek, an' so I'm goin' ter tread ther deck o' ther Sea Breeze afore Bill Heart-Eater does; so then, when he cums ter scuttle her, we'll jest about scuttle him!"

"My noble young—"

"Cheese it!" Boss Bob interrupted, with an authoritative wave of his hand. "My name's Boss Bob, an' I black boots, an' ar' considered about fit fer a door-mat fer sech folks as you. Ther's my pedigree, an' any one thet don't walk on ther sidewalk w' me, can take a street car. I've a huckster cart-load o' bad streaks in my composition, an' I don't allow no man ter go ter eulogizin' me, fer a cent. When I do a job, I do it on my own hook, an' that's my biz. I never was made ter do what I didn't want, yit. Sometimes I feel like givin' a ceterzen a lift, an' 'cause I do et, I ain't a-goin' ter take no back talk. Ef I hed my choice o' swallerin' dishwater, or human praises, I'd take dishwater, 'cause it would stick ter one's ribs. Talk is cheap, an' ye ken't expect a penny pie ter be like a five-cent."

"So when I tell ye I'm goin' ter trod ther decks o' ther Sea Breeze afore Bill Heart-Eater, I don't want no eulogy ner praise-puddin' on my plate. Ef I save ther ship, an' git her inter port, all right. All I want is whatever cash collateral you've a mind ter diffuse, w'ch 'll be all right. Bizness is bizness, ye know, an' the man who shines on a collateral basis, he rises; while ther one who tries ter make a livin' on eu'logy an' wind-puddin'—he sinks!"

Both Morton Prescott and Evergreen smiled their approval, for each felt he had learned a lesson from the street Arab.

"Your services shall, of course, be properly rewarded," the former said. "I am glad to have so shrewd and earnest an advocate to my interests."

"Think I'm shrewd, then, do ye?" the king of bootblacks demanded.

"You certainly seem possessed of more than ordinary shrewdness and good sense; yes."

"Much obliged. You're the second one as ever complimented me. 'Lysses Grant, he sed he tho't my cheek would make my fortune. But, that's neither here ner there, as the little dorg sed when he tried to catch his tail. I cum heer ter make a suggestion in time, so ye ked digest it, fer wittles ain't healthy till digested, so the doctors say. I'm goin' ter start ter meet the Sea Breeze, some time ter-day. Bill Heart-Eater, he's goin' ter start, too. Mebbe he'll git there afore I do, and scuttle 'er. Ef he does, I'll git there next, an' we'll bail her out, an' git as nigh port as possible. Ef ye don't see her nose in harbor by sunrise, ther tenth, jest hire a ship ter fetch ye out till ye find us. Don't only cum along yerself, but fetch yer buyers. Ef ye work sharp, ye can git yer cash, an' git back ter ther pawn-shop on time."

"But if something should hinder, and I should fail?"

"Then, let Alberts whistle! Miss Pearl, she be goin' along w' me, an' thar she'll stay till you git things squared w' the Jew. Don't ye fear but I'll take keer of her in good shape, an' she'll be safer on ther waters, fer laws can't cum out an' tech her there, while ef she war on land it would nab her quicker'n a Schuyllkill eel kin tell a cop. Ther's my ijer."

"And a correct one," Jack Evergreen exclaimed, enthusiastically. "Boy, you've an old head on your shoulders."

"Bet ye a shine 'tain't as old as yourn," Bob replied, indignantly.

"Well, maybe not in years, but full older in the shrewd conception of original and valuable ideas."

"Humph! that's nothin'. Ef you'd had yer

head thumped as many times as I hev, you'd hev more s-nse stirred up. A feller don't pelt around Philadelphia till he's a Septembergenarian, all fer nothin', or I'm a soft-shell clam! This ain't no Bosting 'culchaw' place, not ef she ar' acquainted w' her Centennial mibs."

"Your plan is 'xcellent, Bob," Mr. Prescott said, appreciatively, "and I will adopt it, in case the Sea Breeze does not come in on time. Is there anything else?"

"Guess not. You'll heer frum me if there is. I'm off now."

"Good-day. See that you take good care of my child."

"Oh, you bet! He'll hev ter climb over a belchin' volcaner wot gits her! By-ly!" And the next instant the King of Bootblacks had left the office, and his voice was heard singing out, as he wended his way along the street—

"Black yer boots, make 'm shine,
Only costs ye half a dime,
Tech yer corns up like a feather;
Make a mirror uv yer leather;
Fill w' blackin' all the dents,
An' take a nickel fer five cents!

Shine 'm, mister!"

"You must have considerable faith in that young Arab, uncle, to trust my charming cousin in his care," Evergreen observed after Boss Bob had gone.

"So I have," the merchant replied. "He's as trusty as a bank safe."

About noon that day, Boss Bob called at the merchant's residence for Pearl, and found her waiting, enveloped in a water-proof, and wearing a jaunty oil-cloth covered hat.

"Good enough," he observed, with a knowing nod. "You're rigged out jest right. All ye want is a thick veil over yer face."

"What for?" Pearl asked, in surprise.

"Oh! ter hide yer features till ye git aboard the Belle o' Bosting. Ef Alberts was ter sight ye, he might object, ye see, an' delay us."

Pearl saw the logic of this, and in a few minutes was properly veiled. Then she accompanied Boss Bob, feeling that she could put implicit trust in him. By taking the street cars upon an adjoining street, they were in due time landed within a couple of blocks of their destination, and completed the journey to the wharf on foot.

The Nondescript was already there, and also Colonel Dick Rutherford.

"Hello, kernal, what you doing down here?" Bob saluted, in surprise.

"Ah! you, is it? Why, you see, I just happened down here, and the owner of the little steamer, yonder, wanted me to 'pull the spokes,' for him, while he takes a party outside the harbor."

"Well, now, ef thet ain't famous, I'm an eye-ster," Bob cried, in glee.

"We're the passengers, an' you be ther crew. Ha! ha! Miss Pearl, this be Colonel Rutherford, an' he's goin' ter steer ther Belle fer us."

Pearl raised her veil, and smilingly acknowledged the colonel's gallant salute. Then Bob interposed.

"Come along, miss, inter ther cabin, fer fear some of Alberts's crew might steer down this way."

They accordingly went aboard the Belle of Boston, which was a pretty, small-sized steamboat with a little cabin and all necessary accommodations, being about one-third the size of the ordinary pleasure steamboats. Bob conducted his fair companion into the cabin, and then returned to the wharf.

The owner of the boat had just arrived, clad in overalls, ready for business.

"You look like bizness," the Bootblack King observed, with comical intonation. "Git down inter yer pit, now, lively, an' hev steam up in thirty n minutes, so thet ther Belle kin jest tork. Bin any one else here after her?"

"Yes—Bill Heart-Eater. Madder'n thunder, 'cause she was tuk."

"Let him mad. Did he git anuther?"

"Yes—the Alarm. She's a good 'un, but nowhere at ther heels o' ther Belle."

"How long ago did he git started?" Bob asked, anxiously.

"Over an hour; but that don't make. We'll overhaul him, if you want to."

"Don't want him ter see us, ef it kin be helped. Git steam up as soon as possible, captain."

The man nodded, and went aboard, followed by the Nondescript.

Boss Bob stood conversing with the colonel, until—

There came a shout, and he saw Alberts, the pawnbroker, rushing down South street, toward the wharf.

Quickly pulling the colonel aboard the Belle, he gave a glance at the smoke-stack of the little craft.

Huge volumes of smoke were rolling out, and already the rising of steam was perceptible by the tremor traversing the deck.

"I'll do it, on a venture!" he muttered, grimly, as he cast off the fastenings, and with the current the little craft at once drifted from the landing, just as Alberts rushed up, covered with perspiration, and purple with rage.

"Stop! stop! I want der get en board!" he cried, gesticulating wildly. "Dere pe somebody on board ash I want der see."

"Oh! no thar ain't, cully," Boss Bob assured, with a provoking grin. "We don't want to see you. Tra! la! la! skip the gutter! wipe off yer chin! This is one you owe me, old Three Balls! *Au revoir!*"

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW THE SHIP CAME IN FOR ALL.

As may well be imagined, the rage of the Jew pawnbroker knew no bounds. He raved and cursed like a madman, and offered large rewards for the detention of the boat, as he saw it drifting slowly out into the river.

But, as he could give no satisfactory explanation why the boat and its tenants should not be allowed to proceed, of course no one could be of assistance in stopping her.

Well did the wily Jew know that he was beaten one point, for a spy had informed him that Miss Prescott was on board of the Belle.

But a man of strong determination, and resolute will, he began a hasty search along the Delaware wharves for a steam yacht that would be able to follow the fugitives, as he now deemed them.

Slowly the Belle drifted out into the stream, but Boss Bob stationed the colonel at the wheel, while he descended into the snug engine room, to explain to the skipper his reason for cutting loose.

"It's all right," the old sea-dog grunted, stuffing more coal into the roaring furnace. "I'll have a plenty o' steam, in a jiffy, an' show you how to git down-stairs w'out fallin' down. That Jew waz around heer afore you cum, but he didn't git no information from me. Got a man at the wheel?"

"Yes. Go ahead."

The next instant the whistle rung out, and the skipper of the Belle of Boston gradually turned on the steam.

At the same time the boat began to move out into the stream, then, with her nose pointed down-stream, shot forward like a thing of life.

Within five minutes after they had started, Boss Bob came to the conclusion that he had made a wise move in securing the Belle of Boston, for they were plowing through the water at a tremendous speed.

Sending the Nondescript down to assist in firing, he then took the glass which the former had captured from the ex-pirate's apartments, and, positioning himself in a chair upon the top of the wheel-house, he scanned such vessels as they were passing at anchor, or that were being towed into the harbor, but could see none answering to the description of the Sea Breeze.

Presently Pearl came on deck, and Bob joined her, for a chat, after which he went back to the wheel-house, where Rutherford held the spokes.

"I'll spell ye now, ef ye wanten make yerself agreeable ter the young leddy," he said, with a smile. "I've changed my mind."

"Changed your mind?" the colonel asked.

"Yas, changed my mind. Since I fust see'd ther angel down thar, I've bin thinkin' sum o' committin' matrimony, but when I reflect how menny boots ar' dirty, I guess I won't 'step off,' jest yet. So I'll pass, an' give ye a clear field, on condishun, thet ef ye make a go uv it, you'll whack up—cum down superfine. What d'ye say?"

"I am much obliged, I am sure, for your unselfish generosity," the colonel responded, laughingly. "But I am afraid I wouldn't make much of a lover."

"Git out! It ain't nothin', once ye git yer hand in. I've popped ter lots o' girls, an' it's fun. Besides, ther little gal she be a thorough lady, an' a distinguished furriner like you'd be sure ter make er impression."

"Ha! ha! thanks for your good opinion. I'll not let her get lonely, at least, if talking will do any good—and, mind you, boy, if anything should happen like a wedding, it will be worth your while to name a price."

So the gallant colonel and Boss Bob changed positions, and the former was soon engaged in

animated conversation with the merchant's daughter.

"Bet a soft-shell clam that's a go," Bob muttered, as he gave them a quizzical glance; "know'd they'd mate, bein's both ar' eddicated an' polished, an' they're made fer one another, too; jest like I'm good ier blackin' boots. Bet her guv'nor won't kick, nuther, wh n he finds ther kernal out. Phew! how ther tub scoots! Must be we'll overhaul Heart-Eater soon."

But they did not, as fast as they went.

Long before sunst they steamed out into Delaware bay, and then skipper Jones came up from below.

"Where, now, young man?" he asked.

"We've got our prow in the bay."

"Danno," Bob replied. "Guess you better let her cruise around awhile, till I make observations. I'll git ther kernal ter take my snap, while I go aloft."

The skipper bowed, and returned below.

"Hello! kernal, hain't ye popped yit?" yelled Bob from the wheel-box. "Ef ye ain't, bespry, or I'll give ye ther cat fer tardiness."

"I'm coming! I'm coming!" the colonel replied, blushing like a school-boy, as he rose and excused himself to Miss Prescott.

"What's ther matter?" Boss Bob demanded, with a quizzical grin, as he gave over the charge of the wheel. "You're redder'n a sun-baked lobster."

"Boy, you are incorrigible," the other replied, with a smile of vexation.

Bob laughed triumphantly, and mounted once more to his look-out, glass in hand.

"Ther kernal's did fer, sure," he mused.

Then, for several hours—until sunset, in fact, did he sit and gaze over the beautiful bay through the powerful marine glass.

A grand panorama it was, the mighty sheet of water, dotted thickly with vessels, steamers, yachts, and little tugs, some of them constantly coming from out of the watery horizon, and others disappearing; while still others steamed about the bay, or rode at anchor.

Just as dusk began to settle its first shadows down upon the bay, Boss Bob sprang to his feet, and waved his cap in the air with a shrill yell.

"There she is! there she is! thank fortune!" he cried, as the skipper and Pearl ascended to the wheel-house top. "Off yonder, two pints nor o' due east. An' thar's another tub, smaller 'n ourn, not fur from her, an' Bill Heart-Eater's in it, you bet! Lively now, skipper—tuck in yer fuel, an' open yer durned old throttle, fer we must make ther Sea Breeze afore eleven, to-night, ef et bu'sts ther old b'iler. Mind yer wheel, kernal! I'll give ye ther pints as ye need 'em. You stay up heer, w' me, Miss Pearl, fer ef ther Belle bu'sts her b'iler, we'll be sev'ril pegs nearer ther moon!"

"Oh! sir, you don't think she will blow up, do you?" the merchant's daughter demanded, grasping his arm, in alarm.

"No, ma'am, ye needn't fear," Jones replied, doffing his hat, respectfully. "I've see'd ther Belle red hot all over, an' she never bu'sted a peg."

"Avast, there, you lubber!" roared Bob, making a trumpet of his hands. "Tumble into ther engine-room, or blast my eyes ef I don't cut short yer prog fer tellin' sec a combustible lie!"

Both Pearl and the colonel laughed at Bob's attempted skipperism, while Jones gave his breeches a comical hitch and once more went below.

The next instant the boat trembled as a greater head of steam was put on, and Rutherford brought her to her course.

Away they plowed through the calm waters of the bay, faster and faster, which told that the skipper was crowding his little craft to her utmost.

Once Boss Bob took a peep into the engine-room, where Jones and the Nondescript stood like fiery phantoms before the roaring furnaces, but he crept hastily back to the top of the wheel-house, to escape the stifling heat.

Faster and faster, if possible, went the Belle, as night settled over the water, a continuous sheet of flame leaping from the smoke-stack, and lighting the gloom.

With pale, affrighted faces, Boss Bob and Pearl kept their position, the latter clinging to the adventurous bootblack as if for protection. Never for an instant did the youth allow his eyes to wander from a star that marked the direction where he had last seen the Sea Breeze.

Eight! nine! half-past nine o'clock passed, and it was a quarter to ten, when the King of Bootblacks gave a sigh of relief, and pointed ahead over the water.

"There she is, now, not over a mile away. See! she has a light at her mast-head. Come, let us get down from here."

He assisted her to the cabin; then hastened down to the engine-room, which was as hot as an oven.

"Cool her off! the Sea Breeze is within a mile of us, now!" he ordered, and Jones nodded, grimly.

Next the Bootblack King ascended to and entered the wheel-house, and gave the colonel instructions, after which he went on deck, to cool his feverish brow.

He was still somewhat excited, fearing lest he should reach the merchantman too late to save her.

In a short time they were alongside the great steamship, which looked like a leviathan of the deep, as compared with the Belle.

"Ship ahoy!" sung out Bob.

"Ahoy, yourself," came the prompt response.

"What's yer name?"

"Sea Breeze, bound for Philadelphia."

"Then we want to come aboard, for we hev got imperative business," Bob shouted back.

In ten minutes the Sea Breeze came to a sufficient stop to allow all but the skipper of the Belle to go aboard.

"What's your business?" the captain of the merchantman demanded, as they gained the deck.

"Hain't no time ter tell ye, yit, as time saved may save a hole!" Bob replied, excitedly.

"Search the ship fer a scuttler!"

With a paling face the captain gave the orders, and then led the way to the cabin. As they descended the companion-way a dark figure darted past, and gained the deck. With a bowl of rage the captain sprung in pursuit, followed by Bob and the Nondescript. But, simultaneous with their reaching the deck, a splash was heard in the water, and they knew the scuttler had escaped.

Boats were lowered, and a search made, but in the darkness nothing could be found of the villain.

When this conclusion was arrived at, the Sea Breeze once more steamed on toward Philadelphia, with our friends on board, the Belle of Boston following in its wake.

In the cabin, a clear and concise explanation of affairs was made to Captain Reynolds, and he declared that he could touch anchor in Philadelphia harbor, early on the morrow, as examination had proved that Heart-Eater had not succeeded in his infamous purpose.

By daybreak the next morning, the Sea Breeze was met by the Harbor Police, and all the necessary arrangements perfected for entry into the harbor of Philadelphia, which was made at about eleven o'clock, of the same day.

She had no sooner dropped anchor, than Morton Prescott and Josh Evergreen came aboard, accompanied by several merchants, and inside of three hours the said merchants were the joint owners of the said cargo, and the father of our hero held the checks in hands for—but we will not say just how much. Suffice to say that the amount realized was more than enough to satisfy the Jew's claim, and redeem the mortgage held by him against Pearl.

And the way in which the victorious speculator received Boss Bob, would have pleased an Anchorite, to say the least.

We must needs draw to a close, but will add a few final remarks.

Albert Allerts was promptly paid back his loan, on the 10th day of September, at one minute to 12 o'clock, and the strange mortgage redeemed and destroyed.

Balked in this the chief of all his villainous designs, the Jew soon after disposed of his interests in the Centennial city, and departed for parts unknown.

Heart-Eater returned to the city, but kept shady until the matter of his villainy had somewhat blown over.

As soon as possible, before the disgrace of his second wife's rash act was known, Morton Prescott closed up his business in Philadelphia, and in company with his nephew, Josh, sought a western field of enterprise—first, however, properly rewarding Boss Bob with a cash present of a thousand dollars.

Pearl and the colonel accompanied him, but returned to take up their residence in Philadelphia as man and wife, one of the happiest couples the sun ever shone upon.

The Rutherford fortune has never as yet been recovered, and probably never will be.

Of the eventful life of Boss Bob and his strange companion, the Nondescript, we have given, as it were, but the first chapter, and in closing, we may add that the Bootblack King may come to the front again.

THE END.

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